JUMP CUT

A REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY CINEMA

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> Just as, for the bourgeoisie, the disappearance of class property is the disappearance of production itself, so for them the disappearance of class culture is identical with the disappearance of all culture. That culture, the loss of which they lament, is for the enormous majority a mere training to act as a machine.
>
> Marx and Engels
> The Communist Manifesto

Swept Away
WERTMULLER'S WOMEN: SWEPT AWAY BY THE USUAL DESTINY

--Tania Modleski

Imagine a movie about a Jewish landlord who charges exorbitant rents. One of the tenants finally rebels, installs the Jew in a concentration camp, and turns the gas up a little more every day until the Jew cries uncle, kisses the tenant's hand, and agrees always to love and serve him. Now try to conceive of a review which would call the movie with such a plot a "wonderful political and pro-Semitic farce."

Again, imagine a movie about a black man murdering whites who refuse his family lodging in certain quarters and jobs in various businesses. Some white men get angry, tease the black man with a noose, and force him to kiss their hands and to be a loyal and loving slave. Superb political farce about race relations in present day society?

Then think of a movie about a woman insensitive to the condition of the proletariat. One sexy worker, chafing under the woman's scorn, physically brutalizes, mentally degrades, and almost rapes the woman, whereupon she falls pantingly, desperately in love with him and begs him to sodomize her, so he will be the first, as it were, to "brand" her. Great political and sexual farce?

Maybe the women's movement doesn't have a sense of humor.

But then again, some things just aren't funny.

Granted, the above three cases are not exactly parallel, but in each case, isolating the victimizer and the victim is not as easy as the hypothetical movies might seem to suggest. And in each case, the "weapons" used by the rebel(s) are so loaded with connotations of evil, oppression, and violence that using them to achieve comic effects would be a perilous undertaking.

The third case is, of course, not hypothetical. It is the plot description of Lina Wertmuller's film, SWEPT AWAY BY AN UNUSUAL DESTINY IN THE BLUE SEA OF AUGUST. The *Newsweek* reviewer who praised the film for being a "political and sexual farce" says, "In its most simplistic terms the plot is outrageous and an insult to feminists." Indeed it is, suggesting as it does the classic porno fantasy about the woman who luxuriates in her lover's abuse and even surpasses him in devising more exquisite sexual degradations for herself. But this same critic (along with many others) feels that "beneath the easy reading, Wertmuller is giving us food for thought about the kind of society that breeds messed up characters like these," and that she is "concerned with how sex and politics intertwine." Unfortunately, the reviewer doesn't bother to give evidence from the film which would support this interpretation.

Let me try to help her out. Gennarino, the working class hero and crewman on the yacht belonging to Rafella, the capitalist "bitch," "whore," "pig," finds himself stranded on a deserted island with her and begins to insist that she understand what it feels like to slave for a tiny bit of food (some of the lobster he has captured). But, before you can say "dictatorship of the proletariat," a concept which Gennarino takes too literally and too personally, he is gloating over his physical power and sexual superiority and forcing her to call him "Mr. Carrunchio," "lord" and "master" (but she goes him one better by calling him "God"). Perhaps, then, the film is about the hierarchy of victimization enforced by capitalist society: the system exploits the working man, and the working man exploits women. Or, maybe it isn't really about sex and politics at all; maybe the sex in the film is only an allegorical means to convey the film's *Animal Farm* message. Let's consider this possibility first.

In the "comic and provocative reversal of roles," says Benjamin De Mott, reviewer of the film for *Atlantic*, we learn that "the oppressed can't be expected to behave better than their oppressors." This interpretation would suggest that we downplay the crucial point that the oppressor, in the beginning, is a woman, the oppressed a man. And certainly Wertmuller glosses over all the complexities inherent in such a situation by making Rafaella an almost impossibly stereotypical virago. Consequently, by the time the pair gets to the island, we're happy to see her at least slapped around a few times. It is easy for us to forget that, in real life, woman is powerless, that she doesn't own the factories or formulate the economic laws which cause food to be burned rather than given to the poor. This truth is, however, latent in the film: Rafaella is mostly guilty of verbally humiliating Gennarino; the only power she has exists in the one-to-one relationship of mistress to servant--and while this is clearly not a desirable situation, it *ought* to be clear that she should not be the prime target of a rebellion. Gennarino's desire for revenge, then, while humanly understandable is, from a political point of view, misguided. Furthermore, given these facts, no simple "reversal of roles" can possibly take place. Whereas Gennarino's oppression on the yacht stemmed solely from his position as a worker, Rafaella's oppression on the island is a result of her threefold powerlessness: as a rich person who has never faced any grueling tests of survival, as a woman who is expected to be inadequate in physical skills and feats of daring, and as a person always vulnerable to sexual assault. Gennarino takes full advantage. So even if Wertmuller wanted to convey only a political message, she has clouded rather than clarified the issues. She should have made both parties male.

Obviously, no analysis of the film can ignore or slight its attitude towards the sexes and sexuality. We return to the first interpretation I suggested: that Wertmuller wants to show women as the most powerless creatures in society and to deplore the macho qualities possessed, ironically enough, by people extraordinarily sensitive to (if not obsessed by) their own oppression. But I wish to show that the film, far from satirizing and challenging traditional sexual attitudes, upholds and reinforces them.

First, I deny that sexual violence is a possible subject for satire, especially if that violence is depicted in all its brutality, for the would-be satirist must wind up defusing the subject and unwittingly defeating her/his purpose (the same would be true, to use my opening analogy, of anyone wanting to satirize lynching and lynchers by presenting a lynching party on the screen). The purported satire in SWEPT AWAY... is clearly unsuccessful, as a glance at the reviews indicates. Stanley Kauffman, for instance, in the *New Republic* says that the "knockdown fights between the pair," which putatively occur prior to the near rape, are "as rough and funny as any physical sex combat I've seen on film." This incredibly obtuse comment completely overlooks the fact that at no point is the contest equal--Rafaella never has a chance. The "combat" is more like a slaughter. Apparently Kauffman needed to rationalize his desire to laugh by altering the plot.

But I don't believe Wertmuller even wants to repudiate the rape mentality. I cannot, for example, agree with *Ms.* reviewer Barbara Garson, who claims that on the island "sex roles and... class roles peel away" (or, we might say, are "swept away") and the basic humanity of Gennarino and Rafaella slowly emerges. Garson doesn't find the near rape offensive for the precise reason that it is *only* a *near* rape. After Gennarino slaps Rafaella, chases her, strips off most of her already scanty clothing, thrusts himself on top of her, pins her down, and demands her to admit that she wants "it" badly (which she does), a surprising deviation from the classic porno scene occurs: he tells her she can't have it until she has fallen totally and passionately in love with him. This unexpected turn of events supposedly hails the beginning of Gennarino's

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In case you didn't notice, this is a double issue of JUMP CUT. With this issue we are going to be publishing at least four times a year, but on no set dates. The publication date will be listed at the bottom of p. 2.

Correction. Ann Kaplan's article on WOMEN'S HAPPYTIME COMMUNE in our last issue was left off the table of contents, and Ann, who teaches film at Rutgers, was not listed as a contributor. And (mea culpa!) we forgot to tell you who distributes the film. WOMEN'S HAPPYTIME COMMUNE is distributed by Women Make Movies, Inc., a nonprofit educational organization which teaches women filmmaking and was founded by Sheila Paige and Ariel Dougherty. Their new catalogue lists the films made by the organization, and THE AMAZING EQUAL PAY SHOW (London Women's Film Group--see report in this issue) and two Australian films: THE MOONAGE DREAMS OF CHARLENE STARDUST (Margot Oliver, Jan Carroll and Jan Milne) and THE ROOF NEEDS MOWING (Gillian Armstrong). Women Make Movies, 257 W. 19th St, NYC 10011.

Bye Bye Bazin Department. Announcing National Film Day (an industry and AFI hype job: how about National Soft Drink Day?), President Ford declared that film, "has given the world a window on American life."

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DOG DAY AFTERNOON

Lumpen Lumet

--Karyn Kay

On August 22, 1972, Richard Nixon was renominated to the Presidency at the Republican National Convention. On the same fateful day, two other crooks, John Wojtowicz and Salvatore Natuarale, found themselves trapped within a Brooklyn branch of the Chase Manhattan Bank. When it was learned that the abortive robbery was committed to raise funds for John's lover's sex change operation, three thousand witnesses gathered to cheer on the bandits. In a night they were more popular than Bonnie and Clyde, or Dick and Spiro. At dawn it was all over. Natuarale was dead--shot through the heart by an FBI agent's bullet--and Wojtowicz was on his way to twenty years in prison.

Director Sidney Lumet and scriptwriter Frank Pierson grabbed onto the events, transforming news and magazine articles into DOG DAY AFTERNOON, a film which remains philosophically faithful to the journalistic facts. However, in playing the pseudo-documentarist, pretending to a facade of objectivity, Lumet stands above and outside the volatile and perplexing political implications of the Wojtowicz affair.

Why is DOG DAY AFTERNOON so popular in the cities? Perhaps because Lumet, with a vigilant eye to the new sexual consciousness (both real and professed) of the young, liberal urban audience, has taken the opportune cinematic/historical moment to spring a homosexual hero from the closet. In fact, Lumet teases with tempting script references to *all* the *BIG ISSUES* of the seventies--not only gay rights, but police brutality, Attica and Vietnam--they are red herrings, each and every one. Ultimately Lumet throws over sociology for psychology. He turns DOG DAY AFTERNOON into heavy melodrama, a long and wearying case history of the beaten, sobbing, despairing and ultimately powerless anti-hero. In place of an important exploration of sexist America, violent America, unemployed America, inflation America, Sidney Lumet spends his directorial energy guiding Al Pacino through to a possible Academy Award.

The two men caught inside are Sonny (Al Pacino in the Wojtowicz role) and Sal (John Cazale). Sal is scared, and Sonny, the "mind" behind the stick-up, is growing distraught. He is a Vietnam Vet without much cash, but with an ex-wife, two children and a gay lover to support. His romanticist's dream--to steal his money when an inflated economy fails to provide him with sufficient income--has gone awry. His political action has proved self-destructive, as this fast acting but loose thinking chump is about to sacrifice his friend's life and back his own dumb self into a lengthy stretch in prison. Sonny is surrounded by hundreds of well-armed police.

Lumet draws strange populist distinctions between various law enforcement agencies. First there are the local cops--the warm-hearted, bumbling, ethnic good guys--needed to control the mercurial mob. (As they hold back from the bank the rowdy, crazy crowd--one minute cheering Sonny as a gay brother, the next hurtling rocks at him when it seems he'll escape.) Then there are the FBI agents, the cold and cunning Waspish killers. They manipulate Sonny's family, trying to use his wife, mother and lover against him. And, finally, they kill Sal. But how is authority behind the FBI any different than the power instructing the local police?

Whose rights does either group *really* protect? When Sonny steps outside the bank to see the police and screams, "Attica! Attica," his cry would be less an abstract, crazy joke, if the sign on the bank door did indeed read, "Chase Manhattan." (It has been changed for Hollywood.) The Rockefeller militia will get vulnerable Sal and Sonny, just as they besieged the citizenry of Attica.

Finally, one must wonder why, in a film so intensely concerned with questions of sexual preference and identification, Lumet seems so anti-female? Lumet pictures nearly all the women as mean mixtures of shrew and idiot. Sonny's mother, Vi (Judith Malina), is a bizarrely made-up, pushy dame, who begs her boy to turn traitor against his friend Sal. And Sonny's wife (Susan Peretz) is a corpulent, frenetic, non-stop talker, who never listens, not even long enough to hear Sonny say he loves her.

Are these shrill images of women used to support some challenged stereotypic notion that men become homosexual because women are aggressive, hideous, neurotic? And why is Lumet compelled to plant a snickering cop in the back of the frame as Sonny's lover, Leon (Chris Sarandon), tells of his desire for a sex-change operation?

While Lumet falls short in offering a coherent or satisfying political analysis, he *is* terrifically sharp in directing Sonny--Al Pacino--who dominates the screen in clowning, crying, sweating through the horrible night. He is magnificent. (So also is Dede Allen's editing.)

For Al Pacino, DOG DAY AFTERNOON is a fine film. For gays and women, it is not so fetching. □

DOG DAY AFTERNOON

DOG DAY AFTERTASTE

--Eric Holm

Much-advertised as the "weird bank heist that really happened," DOG DAY AFTERNOON is Lumet/Warner's social consciousness film of the year, a sympathetic portrayal of a gay bankrobber, to show us Warner knows that not all homosexuals are caustic, effete sissies like the ones in THE BOYS IN THE BAND. The film entertains while offering assurance that we live in a scandalously tragicomic but nonetheless tolerably well-managed country. "Miami Republicans Pick Nixon-Agnew Team. CIA Fosters Food Riots in Chile. Gay Bankrobber and Partner Hold Hostages in Brooklyn Bank." That's the way it was, August 22, 1972, but by the time Warner Communications got to it, only the crimes of the gay bandito were still news. The rest was history, which we go to the movies to forget about.

The weird bank heist that really happened had proven audience-appeal. It had live, on-the-spot radio and TV coverage. Thousands of people jammed the streets around the besieged bank as the two robbers holding the staff hostage inside haggled for safe passage to Algeria with their loot. Until the robbers were maneuvered into a slick, FBI-controlled showdown at Kennedy Airport, they and their hostages carried on a copious dialogue with families, friends and reporters via telephone. The *New York Times* gave the event a long, front page story with photographs (upstaging Nixon-Agnew's predictable convention victory) and lengthy followup the next day.

Soon after the reporters arrived, one of the robbers gave them a story too good for the *National Enquirer*. John Wojtowicz announced that he was robbing the bank in order to finance a sex-change operation for his second wife, Ernie Aron, a transsexual. Wojtowicz and Aron had married during the previous December in a much-publicized, mock Roman Catholic ceremony. Later the marriage went bad. Now, demanding the cooperation of the police, Wojtowicz summoned Aron from the King's County Hospital where the latter had been recovering from a suicide attempt the weekend before. Garbed in sad, flapping institutional pajamas, Aron was led through the crowd, perhaps to be exchanged for one of the hostages. Arthur Bell, a gay *Village Voice* reporter/activist who had also been summoned to the bank by Wojtowicz, later tried to capture the tone of the scene outside, a raucous melange of gay and straight bravado:

> Obviously, the whole reverse macho trip was part of the street excitement. Homosexuals are supposed to be victims. And here's a tough guy John Dillinger victor. Instead of demanding his Lady in Red, Littlejohn was asking for his transvestite in pajamas. (*Village Voice*, August 31, 1972.)[1]

But Ernie Aron was dissuaded from joining Wojtowicz' getaway attempt, which continued downhill into Lewisburg Penitentiary and superstardom by proxy for the handsome, would-be rescuer of Aron from an unwanted male body.

A month after the original robbery, *Life* ran a rather tacky pictorial story ("The Boys in the Bank," September 1972) whose authors remarked that Wojtowicz resembled Al Pacino. Before the year was out, Wojtowicz got an ambiguous letter from Warner which, he still believes, offered him 1% of the net from a projected film, BOYS IN THE BANK (*Village Voice*, November 10, 1975).[2]

The projected net from DOG DAY AFTERNOON is $40 million worldwide. It's not hard to see why Warner would invest heavily in a caper movie about a gay bankrobber who looks like Al Pacino, given the trendiness of Al Pacino, of movies dealing (however superficially) with homosexuality and of caper movies in a time of widespread impoverishment. (Caper movies reflect a trend in the real world: bank robberies were up 50% in fiscal '75, according to the FBI. As the chief of their bank robbery division puts it, "If you want water, you go to the well. If you want money, you go to the bank.")

In the process of transforming Wojtowicz' story into a bankable movie, much has been lost. Though appealing in his own way, the warm, mercurial, doggedly nice guy Al Pacino portrays in DOG DAY is not as overtly gay nor as bristling with contradictions as his original, Wojtowicz, is reported to have been.

> John was pleasant, spunky, a little crazy, and up front about his high sex drive. Once, during a Firehouse dance, he balled with a guy on a mattress in the basement. The next day, the mattress was removed, and there was talk about removing Littlejohn from membership. In June 1971, he requested that the members allow him to use the Firehouse for his wedding to someone (who wasn't Ernie). A heated floor debate followed: is a homosexual marriage against the goals

of gay liberation, or did the goals of gay liberation encompass all life styles? (*Village Voice*, August 31, 1972).

Wojtowicz postponed the ceremony and then fell in love with Ernie Aron, whom he married that winter. When he and Ernie separated, Wojtowicz took up with a male lover who visited him at the bank door the afternoon of the robbery and exchanged good wishes, hugs and kisses with him in view of the crowd. Gay reporter Bell tried to get police permission to participate in the negotiations, at Wojtowicz's request, and even managed to persuade Ernie Aron to accompany him but was turned down by the FBI. In short, the intricacies of Wojtowicz's life as a gay are much simplified in the film.

Left out of the film entirely is any mention of Wojtowicz' reported Mafia connections. Wojtowicz had decidedly fallen out of favor with the Gay Activist's Alliance in Summer 1971 over his association with Mike Umbers, the Mafioso manager of Christopher's End (a gay bar) and various callboy and porno operations. After a period when Christopher's End was closed by a police raid, Umbers had announced the reopening of his bar with an ad promising "Weird Sex Now." According to Bell, the GAA immediately organized a demonstration outside the bar against Mafia exploitation of gays. Wojtowicz attended the planning meeting but appeared at the demonstration carrying a sign supporting Umbers, meanwhile having passed along information about the organizers' plans to the mobster.

After the bank robbery Bell investigated claims by Wojtowicz' friends that Umbers and soldiers of the Gambino family (New York-based Mafiosi owning many gay bars, including the renowned Stonewall) had set Wojtowicz and Sal up for the job at the Chase Manhattan branch bank. (Carlo Gambino, the godfather, was under indictment at the time for conspiracy to rob a Chase armored truck). Bell's investigations brought bomb threats to the *Village Voice*, produced one scared witness who talked at length to the FBI and occasioned a perfunctory police raid on Umber's porn-publishing plant. Bell participated in several GAA business meetings in which conservative and radical gays debated over whether Wojtowicz was a counterrevolutionary lumpen adventurer victimized by the mob or a proud gay superfly caught in an act of righteous expropriation, but the debate was inconclusive.

The concerns that make these questions seem important are foreign to DOG DAY AFTERNOON. Wojtowicz' contradictions, which mirror those of an urban gay scene incessantly leeched over by cops and capitalists, both legal and illegal, are chopped out, as is his overt sexuality. This results in a film "worldly" in ambience, inviting comparison with BANK SHOT (20th C. Fox), COPS AND ROBBERS (UA) and a few other "crazy New York City" caper films. Lumet/Warner's snappy but squeamish development of Sonny's (Wojtowicz') character undercuts the film's cautious exploration of human sexuality. In the end we are left with a fairly conventional story about a tragic-comic overreacher whose virtues and vices have disposed him to a destructive, passionate involvement with a transsexual and thence into a bungling attempt at bank robbery that drags everyone around him into a dangerous and muddled confederation from which only the killing of Sal can extricate them. Sonny's paternalistic, sex-role gamey sexuality is revealed in the end to be nothing more than a bizarre tragic flaw. The character Al Pacino plays might be a likeable monster of good intentions who has left his pudgy, frantic wife and kids for a svelte model in need of plastic surgery and the thrust of the movie would be much the same: people are funny.

At the beginning of the film Sonny looks like a fairly ordinary caper-film adventurer, swaggering through deep shit toward the promised land of easy big money. As soon as he starts burning the bank records in the wastebasket, even the bank manager can see he's too manic and rigid to make it across without sinking. His victims are urging him on as detective Sgt. Marretti announces over the phone, "I've got you by the balls," a nice touch of dreamlogic that signals the assembling of an appalling horde of cops, media people, crowds, people from his past who are completely appalled by what he's doing. Gradually, Sonny's identity is, as it were, dragged wincing and blinking from the closet to add to his growing pile of problems.

Because we make our way into Sonny's world through what we see of Al Pacino (a superstar somewhat typecast as Likeable Ethnic Mensch), the faces Pacino makes as the facets of Sonny's identity emerge are ambiguous. On the one hand, they're realistic (each new encounter-as-bank-robber with people from his pre-caper past is emotionally demanding). On the other hand, since we are well into the movie before we learn much about Sonny, Pacino's grimaces carry a somewhat surreal cargo. "Surprise, surprise, Sonny the Bankrobber, you're on *Candid Camera is Your Life*, and you've just been transformed into a gigantic homosexual with an ex-wife and kids, a transsexual second wife who thinks you're crazy for robbing this bank, a possessive mother who still loves you to pieces, and last but not least, a psychopathic partner who finds it a bit unsettling that those reporters are telling people *he's one, too!*"

True, stereotypical expectations of how homosexuals are supposed to act are somewhat deflated when audiences are drawn into sympathetic identification with a supermensch bankrobber who turns out to be gay. But building audience sympathy for a homosexual who looks and acts like Al Pacino only takes us so far in the context of a film whose overall vision of human society and sexuality is so conservative. The only hints of lust in the film are Sgt. Marretti's blatant latent "I've got you by the balls" and Sonny's sexist remark to Marretti later, after Marretti's patently insincere offer of a light sentence if Sonny surrenders: "Kiss me. I like to be kissed when I'm gettin' fucked." And though Sonny's exchange over the telephone with his lover Leon is movingly done, it reinforces the film's image of homosexuals as touching crazies while further defining Sonny's identity as a horribly confused, ultimately self-destructive burden, a pathology that exists only to intensify his systematic humiliation as the bungling of the bankjob goes on. Sonny's leitmotif--"I'm dyin' here"--contrasts poignantly with Leon's devastating response to it: "Thanks a lot and bon voyage." (What else can Leon say to a man who once tucked him in by murmuring, "Go to sleep, Leon, so it won't hurt when I pull the trigger?")

Women fare little better than gays in the film. Wife #1 (Angela) fares the worst because, after all, she has driven her husband to buggery. Angela and the kids are the first characters we see in the movie, scurrying frenziedly through heavy street traffic, wild-eyed images of urban wretchedness (cut) shot of garbage-eating dog (cut) American flag coming down outside the bank (symbolism as ham-handed as the Elton John soundtrack). Angela probably has good reasons for not wanting to see Sonny off to Algeria, but when pressed she can only whine, "I can't get a babysitter." The only strong woman in the film is Shirley Bell (played superbly by Penny Allen). The real Shirley Bell was a recently-employed *part-time* teller who figured prominently in negotiations between the cops and the robbers, as she does in the film. But in the film she is *promoted* to head teller, an enlightened queenbee looking after her "girls," and the working-class women who stand out are portrayed as neurotic twits or as lascivious, thrill-seeking hussies. Improbably, when Sonny asks the tellers how much they make, it is Mrs. Bell who answers, "Not very much." Management speaks up for its "girls."

Lumet/Warner's conservatism colors the treatment of the street action in the film as well. The scenes of militancy are from Al Capp, not Eisenstein. They are choreographed as urban mob smartassedness, charming but easily rechannelled into greed or bloodlust. It is in that context that Sonny, with the support of the crowd, demands that the cops put down their guns in the name of Attica. (At the sound of *that* word, Lumet/Warner's Krazy Kops scuttle like roaches caught in the leaping camera angles and the glare of The Word. They appear disoriented, not so much by the unruliness of the crowd as by the magic of that word, *Attica*. Is this a first for Hollywood?) That Sonny is able to get the crowd riffing behind him about Attica is cut down later when he commences throwing them marked bills and gets a bunch of them arrested. What a manipulator!

The shades of Attica that flit across the screen are very dim. When Sonny shoots at the cops trying to break in at the back of the bank, it's left unclear whether they're doing that on orders from their superiors or out of their own bloodthirstiness. Marretti is continually having to restrain them from pointing their guns at Sonny. Lumet/Warner is not interested in showing us what David Rockefeller was doing while his bank was being occupied. Even the name of the bank is changed from Chase Manhattan to First National (maybe so there won't be as much heat from the Rockefeller family when *that word* comes booming from the screen?). Lumet/Warner's treatment of the local cops gives a certain authority to Sonny's wish that the feds arrive soon so they'll have a chance to get out without a bloodbath.

In the end, the judicious though grey forces of federal law 'n order set up the rescue of Sonny and the hostages from Sal, his partner in the robbery (who is low and bloodyminded, like the cops). In a key scene the FBI agent tells Sonny privately, "You just sit tight. We'll take care of Sal." By failing to confer with Sal about this development, Sonny asserts his solidarity with the hostages and with the FBI agents, in effect writing off the life of Sal (who wants to massacre and be killed rather than surrender) in order to save his own.

Exhausted, confused and pathetically vulnerable to the skillful manipulations of the FBI agents, Sonny and Sal, with their hostages, are driven to the airport by an agent, who cleverly "takes care of" Sal with a bullet in the brain while his boss disarms Sonny. Sonny watches, spreadeagled, weeping, hearing his rights read as Sal's corpse is wheeled away. Arriving and departing jets wail a monotonous lamentation behind him. The metallic airport-announcer's voice squawks a few last words that let us know how systematically Sonny has been outmaneuvered and quarantined for his crimes: "Will Agent Sheldon please remain on the apron until all the hostages are inside the terminal?" The obligatory *Dragnet* sentences float down from the top of the screen: John Wojtowicz, twenty years in Lewisburg; Angela Wojtowicz, welfare; Ernie Aron, a subsequent sex-change operation. The turbines of mystified state power and heavy metal manhood sing on. Dum-da-dum-dum!

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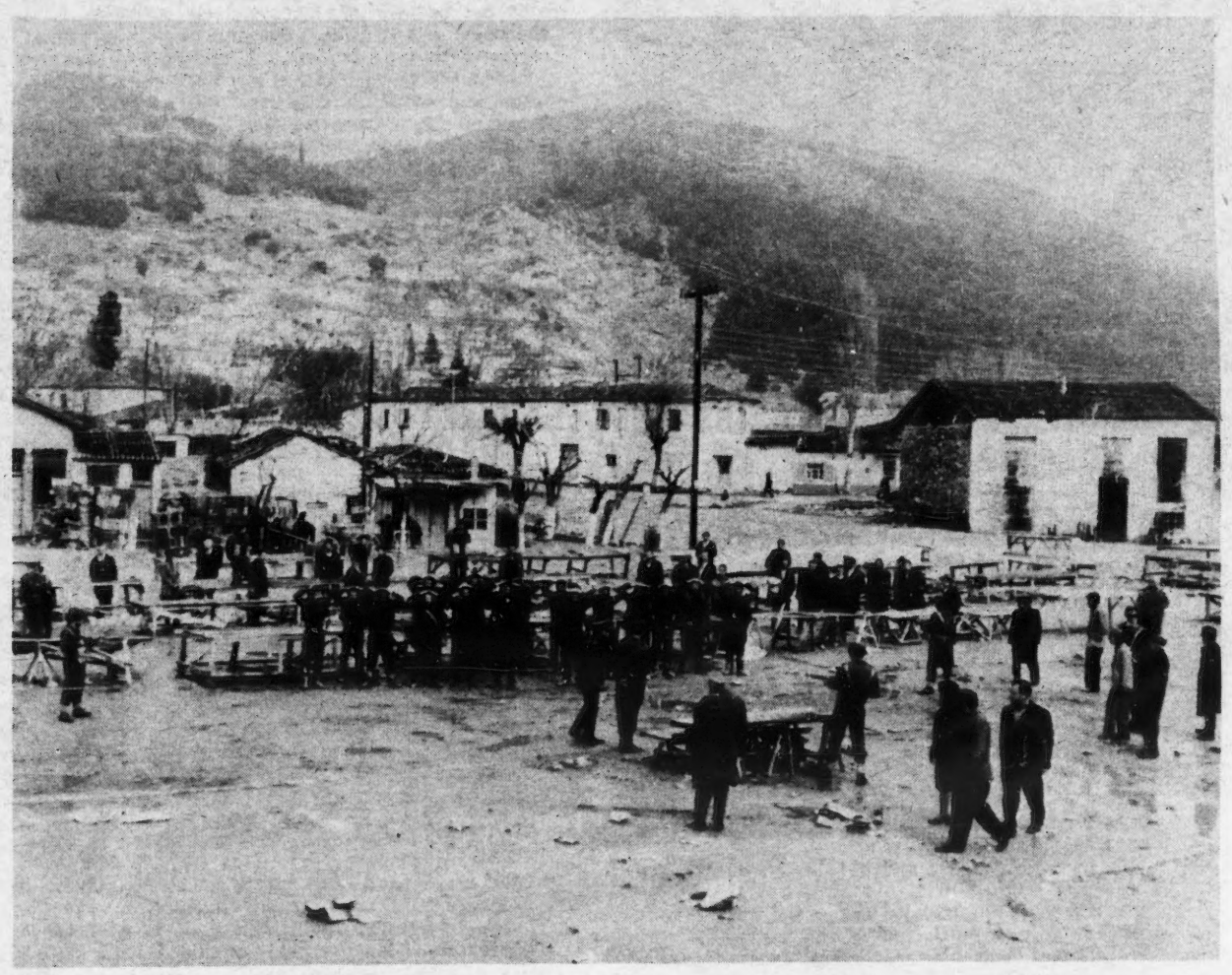
[1]Wojtowicz, when among gay friends, used the nickname *Littlejohn Basso* (Basso was his mother's maiden name).

Bell unfortunately makes the common error of confusing transvestites and transsexuals. Ernie Aron was a transsexual.

[2]According to this article, Wojtowicz was later paid $7500 by Warner for his role in creating the storyline, etc.--at last report, he plans to contest. His first wife, Carmen, who is portrayed very cruelly in the film, received $50 from Warner and, the article claims, is suing Warner and various subsidiaries for $12 million, claiming invasion of civil rights, defamation and libel. The former Ernie Aron, now remarried after a sex-change operation, is reported to have received "somewhere between $25,000 and $50,000" from Warner and, as Liz Eden (her new name), has agents working on various projects including a book deal, a nightclub act and a discotheque called "The Garden of Eden." □

Fig. 21. — Protein foods.

THE TRAVELLING PLAYERS
A Modern Greek Masterpiece



--Susan Tarr and Hans Proppe[1]

> In THIASSOS even though we refer to the past, we are talking about the present. The approach is not mythical but dialectical. This comes through in the structure of the film where often "two historical times" are dialectically juxtaposed in the same shot creating associations leading directly to historical conclusions...Thos links do not level the events but bypass the notions of past/present and instead provide a linear developmental interpretation which exists only in the present.
>
> --Theodoros Angelopoulos

THE TRAVELLING PLAYERS (O THIASSOS)[2] is the fourth and latest work of Greek filmmaker Theodoros Angelopoulos. The film won the International Critics award at Cannes after the current Greek regime refused to sponsor it on the grounds that it was "too leftist." Subsequently the film was voted Best Picture of the Year by the British Film Institute, won Special Jury Prize at Taormino, l'Age d'Or at Brussels and was Grand Prize Winner at Thessaloniki. The film and the events surrounding it were a cause celebre last year throughout Greece, and it has become the second top-grossing feature in Athens. In European film journals the film has been hailed as an innovative breakthrough in political filmmaking and has been compared to prior achievements of POTEMKIN, OPEN CITY and the films of Godard. Hopefully its recent screening at Los Angeles FILMEX, San Francisco Pacific Archive and New York's New Directors Series will give TRAVELLING PLAYERS the American visibility and acclaim it deserves.

THE TRAVELLING PLAYERS represents a major breakthrough in both conception and execution. The players represent characters of the past and present and portray historical forces. There are no "actors" or "stars," but rather representations of individuals and ideas which reflect and create history. The film uses no close-ups, no intercutting and no simplification in four hours. Angelopoulos assiduously avoids the trap of caricature nor does he attempt to distill characters into "essential" Nazis, British Imperialists or Communists. Throughout the film we are engaged with the forces and facets of history rather than with characters, players or individuals.

Angelopoulos has intentionally reclaimed the historical issue of the Civil War in Greece from the distortions of rightwing propaganda and mystification, breaking a thirty-year silence on the subject, a struggle referred to until now by the succeeding dictatorships only as the "war of bandits." Combining three key aspects or levels, a play (the popular folk tale of "Golfo and the Shepherdess"), the ancient myth of the family of Agamemnon and recent Greek political history, Angelopoulos has accomplished the task he set himself in TRAVELLING PLAYERS: a "voyage in time and space" documenting the "terrible years" in Greece from 1939-1952.

"Golfo and the Shepherdess" has been popular entertainment in Greece for decades. Angelopoulos deliberately chose it because, in his words, it is a tale that is as common as "daily bread" to the Greek people. Based on a folk tale about a shepherd who abandons his sweetheart for the daughter of a wealthy landlord, the travelling players perform it as a play. In the course of the film the performance of the play is several times interrupted by Greek history. The travelling players bear the names of the characters in the ancient Greek myth--Agamemnon, Orestes, Clytemnestra, Electra, Pylades, Aegisthos and Chrysothaeme. The complex family relationships and the events surrounding them unfold as they do in the original myth. The myth of the family of Agamemnon is reproduced in TRAVELLING PLAYERS with a very significant difference. The myth is reproduced as a function of the intervention of history and the historical events of the period 1939-1952 rather than as the workings of fate. Aeschylus, in the original *Oresteia* utilizes the dynamic contradiction between *philos* (love) and *aphilos* (hate). In TRAVELLING PLAYERS, Angelopoulos transposes the central contradiction to that between revolutionary and reactionary political tendencies in Greek political history.

A brief summary of the major historical events of this period and a description of the players will be useful for audiences unfamiliar with them:[3]

1. Greece had been under the Metaxas dictatorship for four years when Mussolini attacked in 1940. Metaxas was dependent on England economically and was therefore unable to align himself with the Axis. The Italian advance was stopped in 1940 but the German occupation began on April 27, 1941.

2. Under the leadership of the Communist Party the resistance was organized into the National Liberation Front (EAM) which formed the People's Liberation Army (ELAS). The exiled royalist government and the British supported rightwing groups. As Liberation approached in 1944, all factions agreed to form a Government of National Unity. Later EAM agreed not to occupy Athens or initiate a civil war, which allowed the British to land--"to save the country from anarchy."

3. As the Germans withdrew in October 1944, General Scobie, the British officer in charge of the occupation, demanded the disarmament of ELAS despite earlier agreements. EAM resigned from the government. A mass demonstration on December 3 resulted in bloodshed when police fired into the crowd. This began the Battle of Athens which eventually culminated in the Varkiza Agreement on February 12, 1945. EAM was promised parliamentary representation and amnesty for ELAS provided they disbanded within 15 days. The amnesty did not include violations of the "Common Penal Code" which gave the right wing the legal excuse to persecute tens of thousands of resistance fighters.

4. Realizing the bluff, some ELAS groups refused to obey and instead returned to the mountains. British Foreign Secretary Ernest Blevin insisted that elections be held immediately, despite the chaotic situation. The government was forced to resign, all democratic parties withdrew from the elections and the royalists won an easy victory in March 1946. By October the guerillas had formed the Democratic Army and the Civil War raged more bloodily than before. In February 1947 the British informed the United States that they wished to withdraw. On March 12, 1947, Truman announced U.S. intentions to "aid Greece," marking the beginning of an imperialist intervention in the internal affairs of Greece that continues to this day.

5. Military operations ceased by 1949, the right wing fortified by continuing U.S. presence and aid. The 1952 elections brought Field Marshal Papagos to power heading the extreme right wing of the Greek Mobilization Party. By winning 49.2% of the popular vote he was given 82.3% of the Seats in Parliament as a result of an election law imposed by the intervention of the American Embassy.

This is the historical background in which the travelling troupe pursues their work and their lives. Agamemnon returns to Greece from the bitter 1922 defeat of the Greeks by the Turks in Asia Minor, goes to war against the Italians in 1940, joins the resistance against the Germans, and is executed by them after being betrayed by Clytemnestra and Aegisthos. Aegisthos, Clytemnestra's lover, is an informer and collaborator working with the German occupiers. Orestes, son of Agememnon and Clytemnestra, fights on the side of the Communists, avenges his father's death by killing his mother and Aegisthos. He is arrested in 1949 for his guerilla activities and is executed in prison in 1951. Electra, his sister, helps the Communists and aids her brother in avenging the treachery of their mother and Aegisthos. After the death of Orestes she continues the work of the troupe and her relationship with Pylades. Chrysothaeme, Electra's younger sister, collaborates with the Germans, prostitutes herself during the occupation, sides with the British during liberation, and later marries an American. Pylades, close friend of Orestes, is a Communist who is exiled by the Metaxas regime, joins the guerillas and is arrested and exiled again. Finally he is forced to sign a written denunciation of communism after torture by the right wing and he is released from prison in 1950.

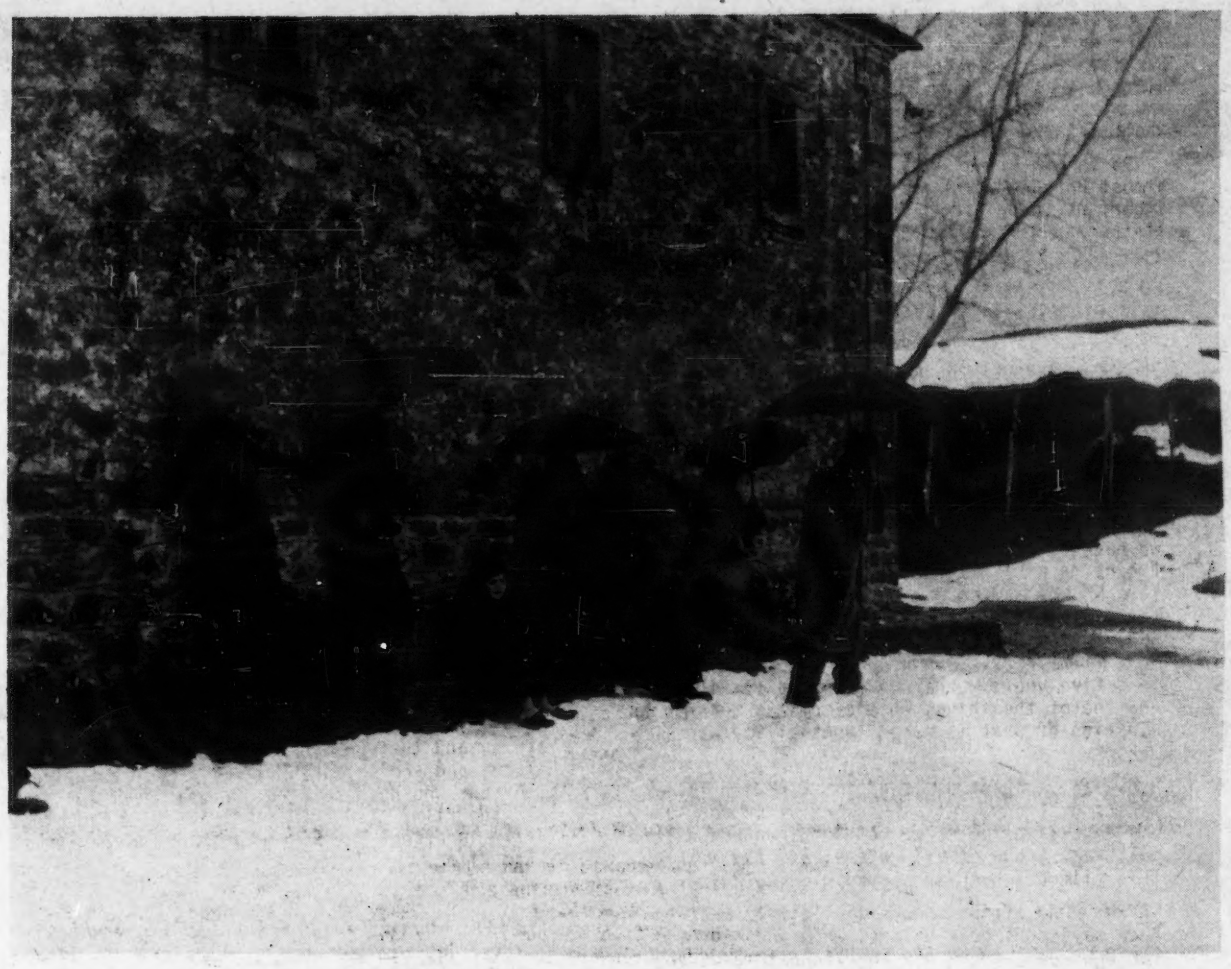
Angelopoulos describes himself as having a "passion for history." He characterizes TRAVELLING PLAYERS as the enactment of a "series of occupations" of Greece continuing to this day. Most of the film, which was almost finished at the time that the military dictatorship fell in July 1974, was shot during the period of extreme right wing dictatorship. For this reason Angelopoulos deliberately obscured most of the political implications of the film. In order to protect actors and crew, Angelopoulos alone had a complete script. He used the alibi that he was producing a modern version of Aeschylus' ancient trilogy when questioned by the government, local military and civil officials. The style of TRAVELLING PLAYERS is nevertheless more an intentional departure from traditional cinematic convention for the purpose of establishing a new relationship with the film audience than an attempt to obscure explicit political analyses and statements. Several key scenes, however, those most explicitly political, were added only after the fall of the military junta and revolutionary and forbidden songs were dubbed in later as well.

In the above quote, Angelopoulos refers to his approach as "dialectical." The dialectic of historical continuity is maintained by the utilization of three primary structural devices:

1. Time shifts within one sequence (i.e., the players enter a town during the 1952 election campaign and arrive at the central square in 1939). In one brilliant scene, a group of fascist collaborators leave a New Year's Eve celebration dance in 1946. As the camera tracks them for some 300 yards down the street they gradually undergo a transformation from a group of singing, drunk, staggering and seemingly "harmless" right wingers to a full-fledged fascist group marching in lock-step to martial music. As the uncut seven-minute shot ends the camera continues to track this group as it merges with the crowd at a victorious Papagos rally in 1952.

2. The interruption of the players' performance by history. Several times in the course of the film, performances of "Golfo and the Shepherdess" are interrupted by historical events. During a performance taking place at the time of the Metaxas dictatorship, Pylades is arrested. A gunshot from the guerillas interrupts the troupe's "command performance" before the British occupiers. Orestes' revenge against his mother and Aegisthos takes place during a performance. The performance of "Golfo and the Shepherdess" is a "normal" event and yet "unreal" in the sense that such performances often disguise what is transpiring historically. Angelopoulos, through the mechanism of interrupting the performance with history, subsumes the unreal performance to the real historical events.

3. The use of soliloquies spoken to the camera with the simultaneous use of time shifts within one sequence. Agamemnon, on the eve of the 1940 war against the Italians, describes the



events of 1922 in Asia Minor (the defeat of the Greeks by the Turks) while addressing the camera directly (present). Electra, after being brutally raped in 1945, described events of December 1944 regarding the betrayal of the "Government of National Unity." Pylades descibres his experiences in exile and prison when he returns in 1950, again addressing the camera (present).

As the camera moves within scenes or remains stationary from the perspective of the "audience" (both the play's audience and the film's audience) the spectator draws connections between events and thereby becomes a participant rather than only a passive consumer of ideas and sensations. Angelopoulos uses time and structure to create distance and "space" in which a critical consciousness in the viewer can develop. He does not emotionally manipulate the audience or prescribe conclusions. He intentionally alters traditional structure to encourage reflection, perception and synthesis by the audience. This dialectical task of creating critical distance for the audience while engaging them as participants on the cognitive level has been tackled before. Brecht and Piscator in theatre and Vertov and Godard (most notably) in film have struggled with this task with more or less success. This pursuit is more difficult in film as the real being filmed by the camera mitigates against distantiation by constantly intruding into the distance that the filmmaker is attempting to create. In Godard's films, a certain self-consciousness in regard to this task results in a high level of audience consciousness of the techniques utilized. Content becomes subservient to technique. Angelopoulos' technique is neither selfconscious nor gratuitous, allowing critical audience consciousness about the *issues*, not the film, to develop. In most Hollywood films, camera and editing techniques serve to manipulate the audience to a place within the action, to a personal vantage point and emotional identification with the individual character and his activities. Angelopoulos brilliantly transcends this fictional "here and now" and replaces it with a historical continuity to which both action and acting are subordinated. By utilizing the transposition of time and events within one continuous uncut scene, presented visually as across a procenium, the relationship between past, present and future is dialectically maintained. Through the use of long takes within which time shifts both backwards and forwards occur, the relationship between past and present and the implied future potential of history is presented in a dialectic manner to the film audience. The structure prods the audience to synthesize what it is witnessing and filmic time is manipulated to provide room for this participation.

TRAVELLING PLAYERS is a brilliant film on many levels, artistically, structurally, contentually. While American audiences may miss some of the finer points due to their lack of familiarity with Greek history and mythology, the film constitutes a recognizable breakthrough in political filmmaking.

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[1]This review was written utilizing material provided by Antonis Ricos, who is Theodoros Angelopoulos' representative in the U.S. He can be contacted through the authors for further information.

[2]O THIASSOS has been translated in other English language reviews as THEATRE COMPANY (Peter Pappas, *JUMP CUT 9)*, ACTORS TRAVELS by Richard Corliss in *The Village Voice*. If the film is distributed in the U.S. it will be distributed under the title of TRAVELLING PLAYERS.

[3]This summary is based on a four-page tabloid special edition of *Thouriοs*, put out by the Youth Organization of the Greek Communist Party (Interior), Rigas Feraios. This paper was widely distributed and available to film audiences when TRAVELLING PLAYERS opened in Athens. □

INTERVIEW: Robert Kramer and John Douglas

'...reclaiming our past... reclaiming our beginning...'

--G. Roy Levin

My interview with Robert Kramer and John Douglas took place at the Cannes Film Festival, May 17, 1975. We talked about their film, MILESTONES, which was shown there as part of the Critics' Fortnight series.

Robert Kramer, born in 1940, was one of the founders of Newsreel and has made six films: FALN, a documentary about American imperialism in Venezuela, 1966; IN THE COUNTRY, 1966, THE EDGE, 1968, and ICE, 1970, three features about the growth of the New Left; PEOPLE'S WAR, a documentary made in Vietnam at the invitation of the North Vietnamese with Douglas and Norman Fruchter, 1969; and MILESTONES, with Douglas, 1975. In 1970, he and Douglas were part of a political collective in Putney, Vermont. At present Kramer lives in California where he is completing a new film on Portugal and Angola.

John Douglas, born in 1938, was a civil rights worker for SNCC in the South in the 1960's and was one of the early members of newsreel. He has made four films: STRIKE CITY, a documentary about a group of black farmers in Mississippi, 1966; SUMMER 68, a documentary about radical Movement activity in the US culminating in the Chicago 68 Convention, 1968; PEOPLE'S WAR, with Kramer and Fruchter, 1969; and MILESTONES, with Kramer, 1975. At present Douglas lives in New York City.

MILESTONES was written and directed by Kramer and Douglas; produced by Barbara and David Stone; shot by Douglas; lighting by Philip Spinelli; sound by Spinelli and Jane Schwartz; research and sound editing by Marilyn Mulford. It's in 16mm color; 195 minutes long.

LEVIN: What first gave you the idea for MILESTONES? It seems it was a film that grew organically.

DOUGLAS: It came after four or five years when we hadn't made any films at all. After working in Vermont, we got to a place where we had to look at our own lives in terms of what we were going to do. Filmmaking was something that we had been really close to and was something that we could rely on in a certain way, given the confusion of that time. We'd lived and worked together for a long time. We'd worked on PEOPLE'S WAR together with Newsreel, and that in certain ways, had been this really strong and clear period of time for us. We tried to bring together different aspects of the past period we had initially felt to be really clear and strong, and show how lives had grown through that period of time. We wanted to piece together those different parts of our lives in a way that seemed to represent a growth and development in a whole different aspect of political work.

LEVIN: Are you saying that you wanted the film to explore what had happened to you and your friends, and people like yourselves, during that period of not making films?

KRAMER: Well, yes, if you want to say that we make films out of our lives. It's like one of the characteristics of how we end up defining filmmaking for ourselves, which is that the scope of the film is the scope of our concerns. It's not like a product. We mine what we're living through. And that's been true for the other films and documentaries we've made--that they're basically concerned with whatever our experience was at that time. A lot of people say that the 70's is like a time of falling away from political militancy. There's a sense in which that's true--if the emphasis is put on the word militant, and a strong, sustained confrontation with the powers that be. But there's another sense in which that's not true, because we came to a dead end, and it seemed as though we couldn't continue to be militant in that same way. That's to say we didn't have the stamina--we didn't have even a perspective that could carry us through. What certainly began for us was a period of time which represented a falling away from day-to-day political work as we had defined it before.

We traveled a lot, and got a better sense of what was going on around us everyday. At the same time we began to reclaim our personal history. As we got a better sense of what was going on around us every day, that was reflected in all the travelling in the film. Personally, it was the first time I had spent a lot of time travelling in the United States.

LEVIN: When you first started going around the country visiting, were you shooting?

KRAMER: No. We were just travelling, going to Glacier, stuff like that. We're really talking about this whole period when we basically stopped doing anything and weren't making a movie. We were finding ways to live, doing what we had to do to live; but we were travelling a lot, bumming around. And it wasn't always together--it was in different combinations of people. And part of that process was the splitting up of our collective and just getting out.

The second thing is the claiming of our personal histories in terms of our families. In a lot of ways--earlier--we had to find our political life in a way that cut us off, say from our parents, from our own earlier experiences which we had denied. It seemed that militant politics back then had rejected all that. And so for me anyway, it was really important to reclaim my past, and to think about the different kinds of importance that culture had, that poetry had for me--the really striking discoveries, for example, of how important the Beat Poets had been, how important Ginsberg had been for me personally--it's just that none of it fit in with our politics at the height of our activity. Then suddenly discovering that the importance of these things was way beyond the limits of the politics and culture that I had been a part of was really crucial...and the relationship to my parents, and even the relationship to what had been good in my education, which I had thought about only

in negative terms. A lot of that is reflected in the film in the sense of families, of people trying to find ways to get back into contact with their parents--and with each other--and to explore that past.

DOUGLAS: I was rejecting my son, who was a year old at that point, and so there was a period of time that I lived with him. That was like eight or nine months of trying to piece together what that relationship was about, because prior to that there was no way for me to deal with that at all. There was no way to even prepare for that reality.

KRAMER: And I had been rejecting a very deep and important relationship that I had been unwilling to wrestle with in a new way. I had just been ignoring completely my sort of complete isolation.

Then the third thing is reclaiming our beginning--which is a process that's really only beginning to pick up now--beginning to reclaim our history in America, in the sense that there is an American history of opposition to imperialism that's much deeper and broader than we knew. A concrete example is the Communist Party, which I have no special love for, but which I had no knowledge about at all during the 60's--it's just that there were very heroic periods in the Party's history. And that's a history shared by many, many other groups which had a strong and militant resistance that preceeded ours--and we had arrogantly felt that we were the first ones who had said, "this is fucking shit." But now we begin to understand that we're the children of that past and there were things for us to learn from that. The reflection of that in the movie is, say, the old woman at the beginning, that immigrant history. So the film emerges out of that period. I was in New York doing mostly akido, which is sort of like tai chi, and we didn't have any plans, but finally we generated this script. The script doesn't have a story. It builds up from all the fragments of the things we've been doing.

DOUGLAS: It came out of people, ideas, situations that we wanted to see in the movie, people that we had lived with, had been close to.

KRAMER: Our method of working was basically we kept a file over a period of six months in which everytime there was an image or a bit of dialogue or a thought or a character that appeared, we'd just put the bit of paper into the folder and never even bother to look at it. Then one day I sat down and sent John a 50-page packet, which was nothing more than these images in an arbitrary order determined in an hour by throwing them on three different piles. Then we didn't do anything for another few months, just talked about it all, and made a few more notes. Then, at a crack, we sat down and tried to do a thing some kind of film could come out of. How much is script and how much is verite? It's hard to give percentages--but you could say that overwhelmingly the film is scripted. But the film is not cinema-verite, is not a documentary, in that sense. Scenes like the old woman in the beginning aren't scripted, but we asked all the questions and we sometimes told her what we wanted her to say. And we shot enough footage so we could basically compose her. The historical footage around her doesn't relate to her at all--I mean it's not from her life. In fact it's a free mixture of some photographs from her life with material from the immigrant past.

LEVIN: Okay. The cost of the film, where the money is from, the distribution of the film, what's going to happen with that, and why and how is the film at Cannes and why are the two of you at Cannes. To take a few questions at one time.

DOUGLAS: David and Barbara Stone, whom we had worked with in Newsreel, they found $30,000 from London--where they live now. That was like a whole chunk to start making a movie with. The film finally cost maybe twice that much.

KRAMER: About the distribution--there are a lot of problems with that; the length, the content, the style. The best that we could hope for in distribution is that the film would open in New York, get good reviews there and then go to perhaps eight other major cities in the kind of theatre that could support that kind of film, and stay in those theatres for a while and do well; and then have a broad university and community distribution. Unless there was something really surprising, that's what we could hope for. The way the system is set up now, it's still based on this high regard for Europe, so in order to get into a New York theatre and make some kind of a deal, we basically have to have some kind of credentials for the film--unless we had a lot of money to buy a house, which we don't. So you come to Europe. That's one of the traditional underground film strategies, and it's the one our distributor knows best anyway and is best suited for us. So the way it's working is real simple: Cannes is the most important festival--it's a total marketplace, and at the same time there's a high degree of critic's attention. So here we are in Cannes, and the film will open in Paris in the fall. But the most important things are the reviews that come out of Cannes and the possibility that it will go into something like the New York Film Festival--which we don't know about yet--and then right from there into a New York theatre. [MILESTONES was subsequently in the New York Film Festival--GRL]

So that's the reason the film is in Cannes. And the reason we're in Cannes is our pact with the film. Basically it's a personal favor to Barbara and David [Stone]. It's been very interesting, because we've had a very privileged existence as filmmakers: we've been in a position where we haven't had to raise the money that much ourselves; we've been lucky to have producers, distributors who have supported us down the line, and we haven't had much relationship with the whole machinery that makes the film industry run.

So though I feel that it's terrible here--it's almost unredeemed at any level--it's been very important to be here. At one point it was explained to us that our being here was like another 50,000 admissions in Paris.

DOUGLAS: It's part of the reality of getting a film distributed on this level, which we haven't taken on in that way in the past.

KRAMER: Another thing that's sort of related to that: one of the characteristics of the people in the film is that they're not actually connected to society, or to the economic base of society in a clearly defineable way. They have jobs and everything else, but they have an almost lumpen lifestyle in which they drift. In a sense that's true for us as filmmakers in that we haven't had any relationship either to the financing or the distribution of these films, although we did in the case of Newsreel. Now the other step is that we don't have a relationship to the world of filmmakers. I don't know many filmmakers, John doesn't know many. In the last five years we have not talked to filmmakers. And one of the things that's come up here is the question of what is our responsibility as filmmakers.

DOUGLAS: Each of us tried to talk with filmmakers before we left the country, because in our past experiences we had been connected to a political group of filmmakers, and the work on this film has been in incredible isolation.

LEVIN: One of the things implicit in what you've been saying is that before, when you made films for Newsreel, there was an alternate distribution system, and now, in effect, what you've done is gone over to a commercial distribution system. What do you see in the implications of that switch?

KRAMER: It's not quite the case, because Newsreel was actually supported by commercial distribution. From the very start, Barbara and David Stone had the knowledge to place Newsreel films in theatres in these eight cities, to move them in universities. It's not strictly like a commercial distribution, but it's definitely in the 16mm market--and also in Europe. So the hidden financing of Newsreel was the ability to actually move the films commercially. And we therefore were able to spend all our time on non-commercial distribution, on what you could call political distribution. Can we make films that will really say what we want to say, and can they really go into theatres, and can we do even better than MILESTONES? I mean, hasn't MILESTONES raised the question for us of still holding back, the obscurity of the form, that there seem to be ways to open that material to other people in another film? The problem, very simply, for me, is that if we're going to be fimmakers and we do films all the time, somehow we can solve those problems. But if films serve the function of coming up every three or four years as a way of assessing all the material that we've lived through, and sorting it out in that way, we won't be able to do it.

LEVIN: Have you made any decisions about future plans, about whether you're going to be full-time filmmakers or whether you're going to go on being politically involved people who sometimes make films?

KRAMER: We don't have any real plans. What is clear is that it would be terrific if we were invited to the Republic of South Vietnam now, and we were able either to assist them, or ourselves make a film, say in a small village, which actually documented in some detail the incredible upheaval of people actually being able to take power into their own hands, it would be such an amazing film to make and it would be such a joy to be any part of something like that. But that's like out there, and the reality of it is that we don't have any plans--or that I don't have any plans.

DOUGLAS: At this point I feel we really want to find some way to continue to work on films for some period of time. That was part of the commitment to work on this film--which I don't see as an isolated film--but time to really explore that as a commitment. No so much in terms of my making films, but really trying to see how we can continue to work on films, and to find a group of people to work on films that need to be made at this point.

LEVIN: The earlier films were propaganda films, they wanted to make a point, to say that America did this, that or the other thing, as in Vietnam, and that this was bad news. The political purpose in that sense is not clear in this film, MILESTONES, and presumably you're still interested in those same political problems, and in that same political way of dealing with life and making films. So, in what way do you see MILESTONES as being politically relevant?

KRAMER: The way into it in this case is somehow through people's lives, through people's lived experiences in the attempt to expose the choices that we've made and what they mean within the context of America right now. That's important political work. Now there are a lot of different questions. One of them is like the particular class of the people involved: basically declasse middle class people. I mean they're for the most part white in white America, and the choice to focus on them is again a choice to say that we're going to make a film about the reality that we know. If we claimed the film was a political declaration, then we'd be in a lot of trouble, because we haven't filled out the whole spectrum.

DOUGLAS: I think it's interesting that when we finished MILESTONES that the Vietnamese were victorious...simultaneously...it's coincidence. I feel that we're now pushed into a whole new space, that we were pushed into a whole new space a couple of years ago in relationship to like seeing how we could identify and work clearly politically. But the trouble spots were our lives, our reality and our relationship to the society. And I think that in a lot of ways that that's one thing the film really, really makes clear--the real isolation, the incredible inability to be clear about what those choices should be; but at the same time talk about the real problems that people have to deal with and solve in their own lives. In other words, it was the first time that we had been able to deal with that, and not just in our film, but even in our own lives on a certain level. So I think of the film as valuable, as honest to the extent that it opens up some of the real and deeper problems of our lives.

LEVIN: It also relates to what you said at the conference after the showing of the film the other night, that when you made films for Newsreel, you made films within a political structure, and that now you have no political structure, and you're making films simply as private persons who have to make personal decisions as to the film. Isn't that problem in making the film in effect one of the problems presented in the film?

DOUGLAS: That's right.

KRAMER: But it's all one piece, so that basically, dependent on the mood we were in, if you ask what's the political significance of the film, we might say, we make no claims for its political significance because the space that it grew out of was the space in which that was the basic question--what is the political significance of our lives? And that's the guilt that basically everyone in the film experiences at one level or another.

DOUGLAS: The openness of the dialogue in the film, the dialogue between two people, constantly, could be almost a dialogue between the two filmmakers because of their isolation.

KRAMER: And the clear politics that grew out of the 70's couldn't be carried forward because of our own limitations. It's the responsibility of revolutionaries to claim all the good things in the world, in the revolution, not to make lives that rule it out, not to say, you can't have beautiful films, for example. You can have beautiful films and be a revolutionary. It was an error of Newsreel to believe that to proletarianize was to uglify. There's a wonderful thing in a book on Cuba, an argument very early in the revolution because America had withdrawn all of the glass producing materials, about what should Cuban glass look like. The first thing they came up with were all kinds of pissy yellow, and it was one position in the Central Committee--it became a Central Committee issue--that that was fine because there were a lot of other things that had to be done. But Che took the position that revolution is not about ugliness and they

Ideology in Action No. 1

A TENEMENT DISTRICT

Congested districts like this disfigure almost every city in the United States. Built of wood and oftentimes in a tumbledown condition, these houses are fire-traps; yet people live in them, jammed together in almost unbelievable numbers. About one third of the population of such districts are children under thirteen years of age. Living and sleeping in stuffy, overcrowded rooms and playing in the streets, it is not strange that an alarming number of them grow up diseased in both body and soul.

Effect of the Boer War on England. During the Boer War, British recruiting officers were forced to reject so many men because of bad eyes, unsound lungs, weak hearts, and diseased bodies that thoughtful Englishmen everywhere became alarmed. Were the English becoming degenerate? was a question which agitated the public for months.

After earnest investigations and discussions in and out of Parliament many persons became convinced that at least one important cause of the physical defects revealed by the war was to be found in the wretched, gloomy, crowded hovels and tenements in which large numbers of city dwellers were forced to live year in, year out. Attention was thus turned to the housing problem, numerous suggestions were made, and reform after reform was gradually introduced.

carried on through--it was a specific technological problem--until they had finally produced a kind of glass that didn't turn everything into this milky, unappetizing sort of thing.

LEVIN: In the late 60's and early 70's there seemed to be a clear crisis situation, and there seemed to be something to focus on, work toward, and it seemed as if people were really moving forward, changing things. But that focus seems to be lost now, dispersed. In a sense a lot of that movement and the ideas have been co-opted, right? And our politics don't seem to be anywhere near as clear as they were. What a lot of people seem to have ended up with is a personal life style. It's not meant as a reproach, but I don't see that the film deals with that.

KRAMER: I don't agree with that. It seems to me that in a certain sense there is far more crisis in America than ever before, that imperialism has entered its final crisis, and that we're going to be called upon to carry out much clearer tasks now. The second thing is that I think we have a better politics now than we ever had before, that we're at the beginning of a really rich anti-imperialist politics. And I think that elements of that politics are in the film. What's missing in the film is the specific struggle against the state, and it's absolutely true that that's a failure of the film--there's no question about it. I guess it's not there because it took the making of the film to realize what had fallen out of our lives--and one of the sections is all about that. But I think it's still wrong to think that the film doesn't address that, because what the film describes is the situation where people choose not to make that fight. It's a small investigation about a large group of people in the United States who have been a very important force over the last fifteen years. And I think that one of the things that the film also reflects is a real attempt to change the idea of who our friends and enemies are--and that really has to be a foundation of our politics. That's why you really need a creative Marxism-Leninism. You need a scientific tool, the beginning of some kind of mechanism for actually being able to dissect a situation so you can figure out in some objective way who you should be working with and who you shouldn't be working with. And the answer becomes that you should be basically working with almost everybody and hating very few people. After so many years of struggle, the revolutionary government comes into Saigon and declares amnesty for everybody except for a very, very few. That's really a tremendous lesson. It's not just about forgiveness or humility, it's about science, an understanding that people can change. □

MILESTONES

White Punks On Revolution

Peter (Paul Zimet) having a vision in the desert

--Michelle Citron, Chuck Kleinhans, Julia Lesage

MILESTONES is an over-long, three-and-one-half-hour, low-budget color film directed in a Cassevetes acting style in which actors of varying ability play both their scripted role and themselves. Taking into account the low budget, the film is technically unpolished but often cinematically audacious and fascinating. Taking into account the filmmakers' explicit intent of making a left film about the left, the film is politically uneven, inept, and often wrong and stupid.

An historical film about what has supposedly happened to the New Left, it concentrates on the character study of many young white radicals in their late 20s and early 30s. In its documentary aspect it presents contemporary persons who shared a common past in the late 60s radicalism and who now live apart and diversely in the world, but who generally fit the cultural or radical lifestyle segment of "the Movement."

The directors, Robert Kramer and John Douglas, offer this film as a mirror for our generation. It shows people who became adults in the civil rights/antiwar/student power/counterculture days that began about 16 years ago, the generation for whom the liberation of Vietnam was truly a victory. The title indicates what the filmmakers wish to present about their characters: significant events in their lives such as giving birth, getting out of prison, or losing lovers--and also the spaces in between, which are shown to consist of raising children, watching tv, working on a political project, or working a bit to pay the rent.

Douglas and Kramer choose to present their theme of lifestyle radicalism by using both cinema verité documentary and a scripted fiction which seems heavily improvised. The overall structuring idea is to present fragments of the characters' experiences, thoughts and conversations. These are slices of their lives or milestones which make sense as they become for the audience a unified memorial experience. Often it's hard to figure out what is going on/has gone on in the film because many characters from different parts of the country who look vaguely alike and are not clearly identified interact, speak their piece, and seem to have lives that interconnect via a network of communal living situations. Those of us in the audience who share an historical past with the characters not only work to make connections between people within the film but between the film and our lives. However, for those who see themselves as outside the historical "moment" of the characters' lives, the major impact of the film must be an "insight" into the psychology and elan of a certain lifestyle.

The film depends on close-ups. When first seen, the characters' visual portrayal conveys little about who they are, what they do, or what their environment is. And the soundtrack is in no hurry to present that information either. The directors use the equivalent of a "sound close-up"--isolated and intense fragments of sound sequences, usually conversations--to get us aurally close to events. In this way, the sound editing is original and inventive.

This "close-up" technique appears at the start of the film with an elderly woman discussing her life. The camera follows her walking across an urban street; then we see stills of photographs from the turn of the century (from her life?). Seen in close-up, she speaks to the camera as she sits in her apartment. Perhaps she is talking to a grandchild, but the listener and their relationship is not shown. The snatches of her long conversation make no sequential sense but come together as a Gestalt about the hard struggles of immigrant life.

At its best, the film's fragmentary organization conveys information in a casual way that itself makes a point. For example, two men are shown relaxing together in bed, and their love relation is taken as natural and ordinary, as it should be. In some sequences, the unassuming and unstrained technique complements the action, as when some men get together for an afternoon of stoned fun in which they throw pots (one is a blind potter who has his own studio) and play music. The pots and music get worse as the afternoon wears on, but it doesn't matter, for the point was just the pleasure of getting together. The episode provides a positive picture of male relations as they develop with the weight of the content carried in the visuals.

Other times, unfortunately, the film depends on heavy-handed and obtrusive dramatic conflicts and on characters talking endlessly about their psyches and their souls. Such scenes--men deciding if they should live together collectively, a released prisoner trying to embrace nature in the Arizona desert, an attempted rape, a robbery shoot-out--are supposed to convey heavy emotion, but actually look artificial and awkwardly acted.

MILESTONES tries desperately to express people's feelings, their emotions. In the characters' psychic milieu, "the personal is the political" really means "emotions are me, emotions--any old ones--are equally valid politically." But what the film actually conveys is the characters intellectually discussing their feelings. We do not see people expressing emotion but talking about it, or about the difficulty they have with it.

Almost all the relationships presented in the film are ideal ones, not in the sense of perfect, but imaginary. We hardly ever see characters at work--at their labor, doing their jobs. Instead, they are seen constantly communicating and communicating in an almost perfect way. The film does not portray, as even Hollywood films take the trouble to show, the struggle involved as people try to get others to understand them. We are given the end results of people's interaction, not the process. Since both visually and verbally the filmmakers give us only truncated little segments of human relationships, and no indication of the characters' development and interaction over time, the people in the film come off as superficial and selfish.

Although life consists of contradictions and uncertainties, MILESTONES is filled with instant wisdom. In the film people keep arriving at those answers which we rarely find quickly in life. Not that the film doesn't show conflict and change: it does. It almost introduces a section with a title card: "And now we're going to show you a couple with conflicts." As the directors pretentiously explore "how hard it is" by showing us an arguing couple on a cross country trip, even these two seem to have between them all the answers they really need.

A literary contrast may be useful. In her novels *Going Down Fast* and *Small Changes*, about similar characters in similar situations, Marge Piercy presents social situations from which the reader is forced to extrapolate a political conclusion. She gives the characters experiences within a specific social milieu and demonstrates rather than explains both their personal changes and her own political ideas. She shows the material conditions of the characters' lives and lets us judge the alternatives--both the characters and ours. However, Kramer and Douglas present lifestyle alternatives cut off from the material conditions that form people's lives. Although the characters in MILESTONES seem to talk endlessly and even shallowly about their lives and times, the directors in a rather insulting way, if you think about it, always underline their message and always tell us what to think.

The arguing couple, for example, have their biggest blow-up in a barren interstate restaurant. By extension, by metonymy, their conflict is "explained" because they are in a barren situation. In fact, within the story of the film, they have left the commune and they have "reentered" the real world. Kramer and Douglas' message here is a trite one, left over from 19th century Romanticism: only by staying outside the corruption of mainstream life can people achieve an authentic spiritual existence and profound interpersonal communication. Since the film never places its characters' search for adequate lifestyle within the larger social and especially class context of US society, in the end MILESTONES assumes that by living with, associating with, and caring about like-minded people, we can get out of situations in our society by changing only our own head. It perversely assumes that it is not only a good idea to raise free and liberated children, but that it is possible to do so. Friends in this film form a therapeutic community for each other. The close-ups, and the fragments of conversation, fascinating as they are, are the visual equivalent of a political myopia which can concentrate only on interpersonal relations.

The world of MILESTONES is overwhelmingly bourgeois in both objective and subjective terms. Only one character is shown who is clearly in a working class environment: he's been organizing in a Detroit auto plant for several years, he tells an old friend who's visiting. But in this make-believe dialogue we learn he has no friends (after several years?), that he has been doing

industrial organizing as a total loner (a most bizarre notion), and that he's all set to give up the whole thing on short notice to join a commune in California (so much for the workers). The other people we meet are basically petty bourgeois, college educated types--artisans, professionals, and so forth--who have chosen downward mobility from their upper-middle class white suburban backgrounds. Although they may have renounced their class perogatives a while back, they still retain that old reliable *weltanschauung*--and values to boot.

As a political film and as an account of what's happened to the Movement, MILESTONES is finally a deeply and pessimistically dishonest film. These characters don't have to work at hard and boring jobs to support themselves and their kids. They face no hard choices, only difficult indecisions which they have the financial luxury to postpone. Thus, after a while the film's intense concentration on interpersonal communication makes the very characters whom the directors want us to admire seem pretentious and shallow. They don't have the survival skills and street smarts of the urban working class. They not only withdraw from the routine of the 9 to 5 world, but they seem to exhalt and hide behind their psychological weaknesses, their crippled pasts. The film would better be titled "Lemmings."

MILESTONES abdicates the principle of criticism/self-criticism, both on the part of the characters and on the part of the directors. The film doesn't just deal in bad politics, which it does freely, but it is also basically dishonest and reductionist in its presentation of bad politics. In real life, some people walked away from the Movement and some didn't, and the people we know who are into this kind of lifestyle alternative culture, if they had been left activists, are much more complex than the MILESTONES characters, much more uneasy with the choice, and much more committed to arriving at a more advanced political point. In terms of its content and the concepts it presents, MILESTONES flattens out the contradictory and multiple aspects of social, historical, and especially political process. Characters talk about "the struggle" and "the Movement," but nobody mentions specific struggles, specific organizations or actions, specific names and places. Characters theorize endlessly about their personal life, but there is no political theorizing in the film.

In visual terms, the film is interesting for the way it makes icons out of the New Left and the counterculture. But because the directors want to keep us inside the characters' experiences, the film lacks the radical-political reflection on the cinematic experience itself that we can find in films like Godard and Gorin's TOUT VA BIEN or Jon Jost's SPEAKING DIRECTLY. In SPEAKING DIRECTLY, Jon Jost teaches his audiences a filmic lesson. He wants to make them politically self-conscious about film, to make them aware of the political implications of the types of images being used. Like MILESTONES, SPEAKING DIRECTLY offers a reflection on the political and cultural movement of the 60s. Yet Jost never reduces the complexity of the images he uses. When he does condense a multiplicity of densely interrelated factors and expresses them in a single flat image, he teaches us how to read that image in a complex and multilayered way. Or he takes what seem to be "simple" images from American society (tv news, a country road, maps) and opens them up in a witty way to a leftist political analysis.

In contrast, Kramer and Douglas doggedly refuse to ask what it means to make an icon out of the New Left, to create and manipulate a simplified and recognizable visual representation of it. Because they want to capture the spiritual experience of their social outsiders, they strive for that visual and verbal cinematic form which will express the character's social apartness and uniqueness in the most intense and extreme way possible. They want the viewers to live *inside* the images and the film.

MILESTONES is a lazy film; it doesn't work for what it stands for politically. It does not succeed at conveying what it intends to and it does not make any effort to get a political analysis across. There are vague references to Native American culture, and to slavery, especially in still sequences of old engravings of slaves bound and chained. Are these sequences supposed to be ironic? Are they supposed to represent the real sufferings of real people in American history, and the legacy of Blacks today, as opposed to the circular wanderings and wonderings of the film's middle class white characters? Probably not, for they are presented on a par with others dealing with acupuncture and natural childbirth. Without a political context, all we have is Rousseau's Noble Savage and woman as Earth Mother. By romanticizing politics and oppression, the film ends up being both racist and sexist. It doesn't examine the political causes of Indian and black resistence to oppression but rather proclaims, "oh, how they suffered, and oh, how strong they are." Similarly, we not only see a woman going through the travails of a long and arduous natural birth at home--with the victory of New Life for the whole commune looking on--but we also see a sequence of an attempted rape, the two sequences being marked in melodramatic opposition as the "good" and "bad" aspects of women's existence, both still defining women primarily by their sexual roles. As the other sequences about Indians and blacks are ultimately racist, so these are sexist. MILESTONES considers Indians, blacks and women with "sympathy," but without rigorous or rational analysis of their oppression and the steps that must be taken to overcome that oppression.

MILESTONES rests on one true observation--that personal life cannot be divorced from political life--but it inverts that truth and distorts it in a peculiar way. Rather than showing an integrated complexity of personal, private, everyday affairs and activist, public, political life, it tends to show a serial variety--factory organizing one week, rural commune the next. Most curiously, it never does show the one movement that has consistently raised the issue and acted on the politics of everyday life--the women's movement. Fine and strong women are in the film, but none of them articulate any relation to women's organizations.

Repeatedly, the people we meet in MILESTONES seem to be remarkably like the filmmakers, Douglas and Kramer--having enough money to afford the material luxury of dropping out to rural Vermont for several years, and then when they feel like it, dropping back into left politics. Organic farming one year, political filmmaking the next. Again and again the film implies that the characters are noble and good and attractive because they freely choose to be politically left wing. But wait a minute. What is left out? Well, for one thing that a hell of a lot of people don't have a choice about being politically active: they have to fight back at work and in their communities because no one's going to do it for them, and they don't have the option of splitting for a commune.

MILESTONES is in the last analysis basically elitist. It sets out a superior way of life that very few have the luxury of living as a model to be followed. The directors apparently assume we'll all be seduced by the vision and will mimic this example of the politically correct life. They intended a rich, diverse, and epic film. What they ended up with was a monument to emotional and political self-indulgence. □

Milestones In Others' Words

--Bill Horrigan

Judging from the comparatively scant attention paid to MILESTONES in this country, one might be surprised to learn of the extensive coverage it received in France following its Cannes showing last year. Those so inclined could argue this as simply the latest installment in a long series of discredited American phenomena being rescued from neglect and rehabilitated by the French (Jerry Lewis being a notorious example). But in this instance to leave it at that would be to ignore the particular inhering irony--an irony deriving from the fact that MILESTONES is at least an attempted meditation on, and engagement of, an historically specific culture that is distinctly American.

MILESTONES has failed to redound to much consequence in its native land. One can interpret this as evidence of America mistreating its artists as usual, or as evidence of the film's generally inept political analysis, or indeed as any type of evidence, depending on one's sympathies. The readings it has received in France--I am here referring especially but not exclusively to the lengthy discussion of it in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, nos. 258-59--have been ones that begin by noting that the radical movement, its traces and its ruins, dealt with in the film has no precise equivalent in Western Europe. Yet MILESTONES' status as exemplary political film is to a large extent based on an unquestioned faith in the documentary veracity of what Kramer and Douglas have presented.

While such cultural relativism may not necessarily be an absolute liability (after all, the auteur theory, virtues and limits aside, emerged from a comparable misunderstanding of actual Hollywood procedure), with MILESTONES one can argue that it is, in fact, of some consequence. The film pretends to non-fiction about a political environment that claims a unique legacy and practice. While an American audience expresses ideological dissatisfaction based on the distance between Kramer and Douglas' rendering of the "truth," the French audience evidently feels no such impulse, having, precisely, no assurance that things are otherwise than as given in the film.

It is one thing to acknowledge that a sizeable portion of the global population believed America to be exactly as Hollywood had self-interestedly fabricated it, but one operates in a different register with MILESTONES, since its achievement is assumed to reside not simply in its depictions, but in the exemplary nature of what is depicted. What is scarcely acknowledged in most of the French criticism is the nature of the reference. This criticism focuses instead on artistic mediation principally on the level of narrative structure, with minimum doubt expressed as to the accuracy of the scenes from political lives sketched by Kramer and Douglas.

Nearly every French film journal that reviewed the film did so in favorable terms, though characteristically praise is offered up with only the most cursory comments on the political line maintained by the film. In describing what is, if it is nothing else, a self-styled political film, this amounts to a rather serious omission.

Positif nos. 171-72, for example, traditionally sympathetic to American/Hollywood cinema, could be talking about any favored auteur's latest masterpiece: "No other extreme-left radical movement, in any other country, has produced an equivalent of this film, at once exemplary and inimitable. Kramer's latest work confirms his place in the front ranks of those searching for a new language with which to articulate their humane and political points....In a sense the most exemplary metaphor (and in all of Kramer's work) is that of the clay the potter fashions....MILESTONES does not surprise those who already know Kramer's work." The film itself is thus absorbed into a discussion of its position and significance in the context of the directors' careers.

Generally, both *Positif* and *Ecran 75* no. 42, are trading in abstractions, and fail to recognize the points at which the film becomes problematic both cinematically and politically. It is less surprising when, to choose two less than random examples, *Le Monde* and *Le Nouvel Observateur* fail likewise, although the following quotation, undifferentiating and romantic, could have been taken equally from either of the film magazines instead of *Le Monde*, its actual source: "It grows like a cell, expanding with its own vital intensity....It flows like a great river swollen by storms. It documents with meticulous precision the whole of a movement in American thought. It is also a film about friendship and hope. There is a light at the end of the tunnel, an oasis in the desert."

Following a series of expansive claims made for the film, *Ecran 75* asks, "Can one imagine a similar film as devoid of intellectualism made in Europe? It is inconceivable." Out of this a theme emerges, dominantly in this instance, elsewhere disguised, invariably determining: America as secular mystique. Durand Echeverria traces this syndrome's initial historical articulations from the Enlightenment in his *Mirage in the West*. Here he argues that the vision of America held by anxious French liberals was formed equally out of their own aspirations and ideals and of frequently unreliable accounts of what the New World was actually about. The ideal has proven remarkably persistent, up to as late as Godard, with his characteristic "last romantic couple" critically aware of the inadquacy--and potency--of the inherited vision of America.

Given the vision's shortcomings, *Ecran 75* nevertheless betrays holding it in a restricted and peculiarly retrograde fashion: "One finds here, as though anthologized, everything that gives originality and vitality to a certain American cinema: the voyage towards the West... the sense of nature (one of the children is named "Leaf," perhaps in homage to Walt Whitman), but also the intimate undercurrent of violence...;" and "Sociologically and culturally it is specifically American, being a melange of trust in man and love of nature, a mixture of naivete and good will, which is profoundly rooted in the history of this people."

The instances in which *Ecran 75* tentatively instigates a political analysis result mostly in the review's facile normalization, e.g., *Ecran* properly notes that most of the characters are white bourgeoisie but settles this, as a critical issue, by saying, "but they refuse their privileges." This seems either willful misreading or surrender to the articulated theme (articulated by the film and by the reviews) of America as a betrayed but recuperable Walden.

The film speaks a silence on the economic privilege of its characters, but it is not the French audience that hears this silence as disturbing. A comparable misreading prevails in the French assertion that the film is exemplary because no character emerges who is of, analagously, heroine/hero stature. Simply in terms of screen time, at least two central characters do emerge: the woman who is exceptional (heroic) by virtue of being pregnant and giving birth, and the man released from prison whom the film follows on his literal voyage of self-discovery, i.e., portait of the _____ as a young man. It follows logically that since this is not recognized, neither is the explicit and sentimental sexism of the destinies assigned.

Cahiers printed the transcript of their editorial colloquiam following a lengthy text by Kramer and Douglas, and though the discussants characteristically resort to the higher wisdom of the filmmakers, they manage to confront a number of crucial issues in the process. This long and in some ways dense discussion can pretend to neither systematic nor exhaustive analysis. And, as previously suggested, it suppresses questions ideologically unsettling to an American audience. But other questions manage to be raised as they are raised in none of the other critiques, and it is in the posing of these questions--as separate from the answers given--that

represents the *Cahiers* achievement.

A partial gloss, then: the behavioral conjunction in the film of speaking and doing, regarded as the central dramatic distinction; the difference implicitly posed between "the state" and "the nation"; the extent to which the spectator's efforts to maintain a hold on the narrative's threads are meaningful and productive; the problematic (apparent) absence of fiction and of individual dramatic problems; the representation of the family and of the military; the dramatic displacement of black and native Americans; and the possibility and expense of living as docile subversive.

Still, the surface of the collective Marxist identity out of which these questions emerge is occasionally pierced in surprising ways by older *Cahiers* values. One is momentarily taken aback, especially if one is less than sympathetic to the film's meandering progression, to learn that the film's real precedents are found in Mizoguchi and Dreyer ("its narrative economy"), both pantheon figures of a different, more innocent time. It is similarly jarring, though rather more suggestive, to hear that Hollywood cinema was essentially an historic one, obsessively concerned with the founding of the state/nation. Minimal attempt is made to bolster this insight. One might, on the contrary, see as a hallmark of Hollywood cinema its nearly-programmatic suppression of any actual historical, or even temporal, sense.) Comparably, neither is there support given for the assertion that MILESTONES is "cinema of montage." Lacking textual analysis/proof, this is next to useless information, as is the assessment of the film as containing "a minimum of connotation." The critics deploy the term here in an apparently private system to which they offer no access. The by-now inevitable assimilation of Kramer and Douglas to Straub and Huillet is performed at some length, and here the argument is well put and convincing, hinging as it does on the notion of exile and the problem of speaking out of that state, of knowing to whom one is speaking.

A subsequent *Cahiers* article in no. 264 by Serge Daney seems in one or two instances to critique the round-table discussion in which he participated (e.g., saying the discussion was "a bit idyllic about a film that is a big idyllic") but he continues in his article, titled "The Aquarium," to cast the film in wholly effusive abstractions--"idyllic" ones at that, depending on strained metaphors from animal and vegetable terminology. MILESTONES becomes "anti-NASHVILLE," whose characters are dismissed as Altman's "contemptible fauna, his derisory Southern zoo."

Still, the initial *Cahiers* discussion in no. 258-59 attains considerable value simply because it illustrates an awareness of what some of the relevant issues might look like in the face of such a film. An American audience judging its politics as anywhere from enraging to totally alien will not, however, be put at ease. Asking proper questions is a talent, but for answers one needs first of all a reliable witness, and in this instance the minimum requirement is to have gone through the Sixties in this country and to see how today we connect to all that. □

LAST CHANCE BACK ISSUES

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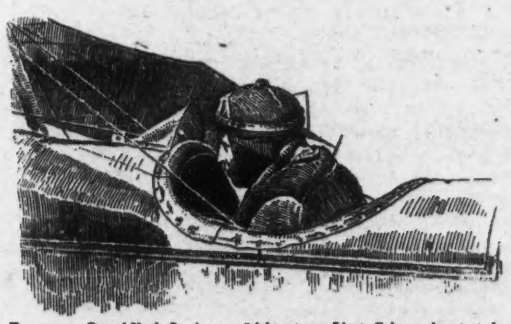

FIG. 120. — One of Uncle Sam's new aërial postmen, Lieut. Culver, who started from Washington during the summer of 1918 in the first aërial mail flight.

In our own country, the United States Government is authorized by Congress to spend $300,000 annually for carrying mails by air routes. During the Mexican disturbance, when American soldiers were camping in Mexico, mail was taken almost daily from Columbus, New Mexico, to General Pershing's headquarters, a distance of over 400 miles.

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THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR

Hollywood Uncovers the CIA

SYDNEY POLLACK INTERVIEWED

--Patrick McGilligan

Hollywood, like the rest of the country, has suddenly discovered the CIA, no doubt thanks to Watergate, the Rockefeller Commission, the Church-Pike investigations, etc. But no one to the left of Daniel Moynihan should be very pleased with the results.

Not that the CIA, as a concept, is any stranger to the Hollywood movie. CIA-style espionage agencies have flourished in American pictures for years, especially during the 1960's, when there was a substantial James Bond-influenced trend that "modernized" the old-style cloak-and-dagger thriller. The CIA, or a facsimile, appears often today in low-budget or independent films, especially those which are aimed at a Black market. But the major studios have been slow, in the catch-phrase of the McCarthy Era, to name names. They began to react a few years ago, with EXECUTIVE ACTION, and then THE PARALLAX VIEW, flawed but courageous films which had in common the unstated presence of the CIA; yet, though both movies vacillated, they were speedily junked by distributors, and died the unseen death.

This year things are different; criticism of the CIA is more popular, de rigueur between cocktails. Three major pictures about the CIA--each unhesitatingly use the CIA as an *identifiable* villain--have been released by American studios, each bolstered by a top male box-office star. But they are vastly disappointing films--evasive, exploitative and politically vacuous. Two of them--Sam Peckinpah's THE KILLER ELITE and Sydney Pollack's THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR--are completely concerned with an internecine warfare (James Caan battles renegade Robert Duvall, Robert Redford is pitted against a mysterious Mid-East cabal), as if to deny or diminish the thought of international consequences from CIA actions. (Heaven forbid that Allende should be mentioned.) The third movie, BREAKOUT, a Charles Bronson vehicle, is the most interesting politically, even though it is the least interesting, cinematically; it occurs in Mexico and deals quite blatantly with CIA intervention in foreign affairs, with Robert Duvall as an ambiguous "good guy" imprisoned on trumped-up CIA charges. In this film, the *entire* CIA is understood as the "enemy," not simply a splinter cabal. And there is an exhilarating climax, when a CIA killer is chopped into bloody pieces by an airplane's propeller, while he wrestles with Charles Bronson on a runway. Of course, this sequence always seems to elicit the loudest applause.

But, of the three movies, THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR has drawn the most critical attention--many liberal critics seeing it as a pertinent message to CIA-weary America--and likely, it will also accumulate the largest box-office receipts. An underground newspaper in Madison, Wisconsin, went so far as to include the film in its year's Ten Best List, as "a chillingly accurate appraisal of CIA inter-office warfare." But while that may be true, THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR falls desperately short of any real accuracy about the CIA, being instead a wide-screen whitewash tantamount to the Rockefeller Commission. Sure, the story has its strong aspects: a clique of power-hungry agency bureaucrats who are secretly plotting intervention in the Middle East (not far from fantasy); a plot gimmick (the Redford character decodes novels for the CIA) that suggests the presence of E. Howard Hunt; an occasional specificity that brings the plot, ultimately, to a cozy hamlet named Chevy Chase, Maryland; and an ambiguous hint at the film's conclusion that the *New York Times* is under the thumb of the CIA. But the script is so mechanical in its dialogue and details that the politics suffer. I cite such flaws as the hoked-up romance between Faye Dunaway and Robert Redford; their maudlin love scene is especially undercut by soft-focus shots of the "lonely" photographs on Dunaway's apartment wall. It's a "meaningful" gesture worthy of an uninspired undergraduate.

More alarmingly, the film vehemently suggests that the CIA's "excesses" are attributable to a small, dangerous yet ultimately controllable clique--that is presumably motivated by abstract power-mongering rather than economic imperatives. This is its deep, unforgiveable political flaw, and it renders the entire film, bright moments notwithstanding, shallow and naive. It's easy to discern the political intelligence at work here. Both Pollack and Redford are well-known liberals, who probably agonized over the THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR script (especially the ending since the CIA was making headlines daily). And Pollack can be a thematically provocative director, albeit in a more existential vein; he demonstrated such promise in THEY SHOOT HORSES, DON'T THEY?, JEREMIAH JOHNSON and THE WAY WE WERE. The latter film is notable for its fascinating glimpses of people who sell out their politics in Hollywood; similarly Pollack sells out by not dealing directly with the Hollywood blacklist (pertinent sequences from the released film were cut). Ignoring the more complex demands of THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR, he is either unwilling or unable to do service to politically explosive material because of this personal weakness. Pollack's THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR is ultimately a souped-up contemporary spy caper with lukewarm political impact.

I talked with Sydney Pollack last fall on the day his picture opened in Boston. He was in a foul mood, after having read a review in the daily newspaper. Pollack was irked not because the reviewer didn't like THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR (as a matter of fact, he did), but because the reviewer nevertheless termed it "shallow." It was a movie, Pollack said angrily, that he never intended to be profound. The following interview is offered as evidence to people with like expectations: Pollack's double-bind of weighty themes and facile technique betrays the confusion of the liberal mind.

INTERVIEW

M: Did you have any contact with the CIA while you were making THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR?

P: There wasn't, really. We would have welcomed it, but we knew better than to try to pursue it actively in any way. What we did was to invite Mr. (Richard) Helms to come and watch the shooting for a day, which he did. I think he enjoyed himself very much. It was a movie, finally, and not any attempt on our part to do a definitive documentary.

I think that the critics are falling into all kinds of traps with this movie. Absolutely falling all over themselves. Half the critics are looking at it as a serious political piece of propaganda and criticizing it on that level which, god knows, wasn't intended. The film was three-quarters finished before any of these CIA revelations began to happen.

We were doing a straight thriller. That's what we wanted to do. And we were shocked that as much of what we imagined, if you will, was coming to pass. We were absolutely dumbfounded. The attempt was, first of all, to make it faithful to the genre of a thriller. And within that, to explore certain ideas of suspicion, trust, morality, if you will; but it was not intended in any way as a documentary, I suppose, but as a warning--using the CIA almost as a metaphor, and drawing certain conclusions from post-Watergate America.

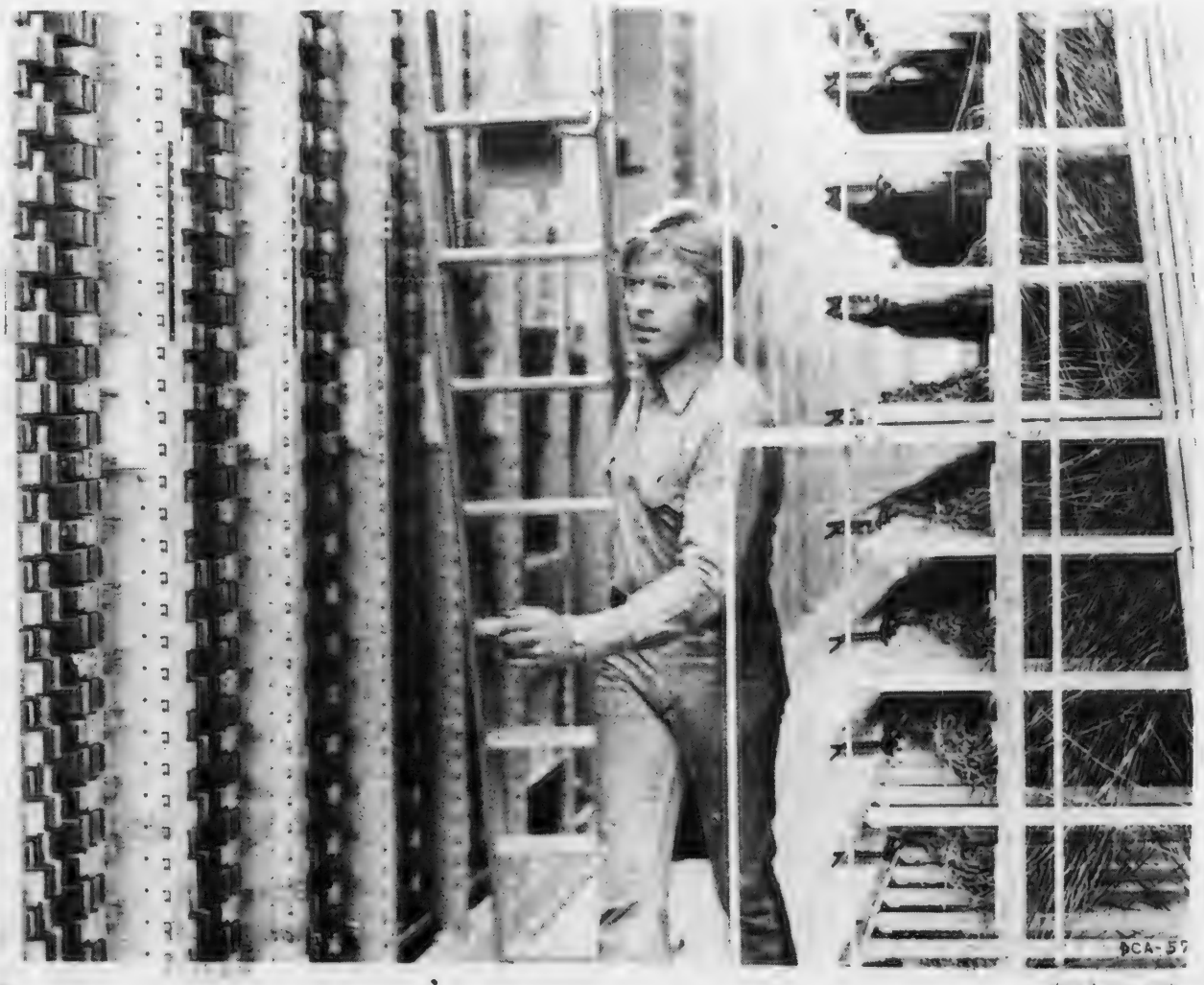
I didn't want this picture to be judged; it's a movie. I intended it always as a movie. I never had any pretentions about the picture and it's making me very angry that I'm getting pretensions stuck on me like tails on a donkey. If I wanted to be pretentious, I'd take the CIA seal and advertise this movie and really take advantage of the headlines. Central Intelligence Agency, United States of America, Robert Redford, Faye Dunaway. And don't think it wasn't suggested--obviously, that's what advertising people do. We really put our foot down--Redford and I--to absolutely stop that.

M: I mean--did you question whether or not you would use the CIA presence so literally in the film?

P: Sure, we did think twice about it. But I didn't think there was any way to duck it. The word that comes to my mind is speculative. It was a speculative film. We were just speculating, saying what if, what if, what if. Then we got caught in the headlines. I think that's interfered rather strongly with an objective assessment of the film as a film, as a movie. From the producer's point of view, that's terrific, because it makes the picture timely. From a critical standpoint, my fear is that it has forced the movie to be judged by standards other than it was intended to be judged by. If I were to make the film now, I'd still make the film the way I made it. Because I wouldn't attempt to make a serious film about the CIA without switching entirely what I was doing. I'd give up the whole spy genre and do a documentary about morality and government bureaucracies. That's another kind of movie....

Nobody is bored in this movie. There's nothing to hate in this movie. It's a movie, what's to hate? What's to not like? JAWS it's not, maybe, but there's nothing to hate in it. So what happens is that the intellectuality of critics takes over, after the fact. That's what I think happens. They go to the movie, have a damn good time and then they feel guilty about it, because it's in the headlines. If it weren't in the headlines now, they'd come away saying, jeez, this is a terrific spy thriller. But now they have to say, wait a second, it's a spy thriller, but look what it's about...and then a certain kind of intellectual snobbery takes over. I'm not knocking the critics; I'm just saying that they have a conscience that hits them afterwards.

The same thing happend with THE WAY WE WERE. Critics went to THE WAY WE WERE and they all cried. Then they came out and wrote about it as dribble. In between the lines they begrudgingly said they liked it, but they felt guilty for liking something so overtly



the price schedule on page 2.

romantic....I think if they had to write about it immediately after, it would be terrific. They get too long a time to think.

M: But you are exaggerating the movie's political impact--I think it is a very serious film.

P: Here's what I always try to do, and again it's something I get my wrists slapped for all the time. I want to work within genres--a western, romance, melodrama or spy film. And then, within that form, which I try to remain as faithful to as I can, I love to fool around with serious ideas. The westerns that I've made have not been straight westerns, by any manner. JEREMIAH JOHNSON was, for me, a very serious film. It was a western, but it was still a serious film and it entertains very serious ideas about copping out, dropping out, how far can you go?--Do you have to make it work within the system or do you try to make it work elsewhere? To me, those are serious ideas, but still it's a movie, basically an entertainment.

Here I tried to deal, as much as I could, with trust and suspicion, paranoia, which I think is happening in this country, when every institution I grew up believing was sacrosanct is now beginning to crumble. It's destroying, in a very serious way, a certain kind of trust that is essential to have in a working society. Now those are all very pretentious ideas to have. But I don't think they have to be pretentious, if you put them in this kind of entertaining piece. I don't think there's anything wrong with exploring those ideas as long as you don't get pretentious about it. I think it's interesting to take Redford as a man who trusts, in the beginning of the movie, and turn him into a guy who is practically paranoid by the end, so much so that he distrusts his lover. And to take a girl (sic) who doesn't trust in the beginning, and when she's forced to be close at gunpoint and doesn't die, she ends up trusting in an odd way. Those ideas are serious ideas, but I don't think of it as an idea picture. I think of it basically as a thriller, and that was what I wanted to make.

M: The ending is very political.

P: That, to me, was very important. I did not want to take a cheap shot at the CIA, which is very easy to do now. I wanted to give (Cliff) Robertson a voice. Let him say what he says there, which is, hey look, we have a job to do. We didn't invent it. You guys paid the taxes for us to do this job....I don't necessarily agree with that point of view but I felt I had to voice it, in all fairness, because otherwise I think it's just taking a cheap shot, which is easy to do--making them a bunch of moustache-twirling villains. God knows, they're bad enough. All you have to do is present the reality.

M: You sound as if you have a lingering respect for the CIA.

P: What I mean is, I don't defend the CIA's actions. I think they're horrific. But, on the other hand, I don't think we should abolish the CIA. What we have to do is find some way of making a check and balance system work that, conceivably, hasn't been working before. The CIA has grown autonomous in a way that's horrific. Have you read in the paper about the plates they've printed to make their own money, billions of dollars? They've printed billions of dollars, and the money has turned up in Mafia hands. Those actions are horrific. So anybody who goes to see the movie and says, this is far out, this couldn't happen, it's not true.

M: Was the *New York Times* ending thrown in because of what was happening while you were shooting--the Watergate disclosures?

P: No, it wasn't at all. We didn't want the CIA to end up victorious, it was as simple as that. When a power that strong is after a single individual, where can he (sic) go? The book has the CIA killing everybody; I didn't want to do that, I didn't want him dead. I wanted some hope, some sense that the audience could feel that there is a recourse; and the fact is, as corny as it seems, that what is changing everything now is the media. That's the pipeline that's exposing all of this, whether it's Ellsberg with the Pentagon Papers, or Watergate with Bernstein and Woodward. Somehow, when it's public knowledge, that at least is a starting point. And we couldn't come up with another ending.

M: Did you consider other endings?

P: We considered following the book, where he kills people, but that just sounded cheap to me. There was another alternative, which was for him to somehow find a way of discrediting the character played by Cliff Robertson, and we toyed with that for awhile, but that didn't work out. I was always nervous about the *New York Times* ending; so was Bob. We all were. But under the circumstances, it seemed the most truthful one, albeit corny. I mean, how would a guy get himself out of a situation like that? The only way I know is to write a book about it, to go on television and say, hey look, these guys are after me and here's the proof. I mean, somehow, when you become a large public figure, it's hands off. It's like the CIA wouldn't dare to try to make a move to stop this movie. We have too high a profile. It's like the Russians not killing Solzhenitsyn. If he were less famous, they'd do something to him. But notoriety is his only protection; he has too high a profile. What would happen to world opinion if something did happen to Solzhenitsyn.

M: I understood the ending differently. Isn't there a strong implication that the CIA also controls the *New York Times*?

P: There is. We are saying, god help you all if we can't keep this pipeline open. What if. That's why he says, suppose they don't. That's all I really meant--not that they will or they won't. There is that slight bit of doubt, and that's what I wanted. That's why I froze the frame, with Redford looking like he might be hunted--because, you know, there was a real attempt to suppress the Pentagon Papers. We're taking all of this very for granted now, all this freedom of the press. Oh come on, they're going to print it, they're going to print it. Well, it's only within a couple of years that that's happened. There was real government pressure to stop the *New York Times* from printing the Pentagon Papers--and they might have won, very easily. I don't know how much pressure is being brought to bear right now, on these newspapers, by CIA people. It can't be good for the CIA--there's a bad part to all this, too

--because the CIA, I'm sure, is partially paralyzed at this moment because of the public attention on them. And that's not good for this country either.

M: I disagree. I don't have any affection or respect for the CIA--for operations like the murder of Allende. It sounds as if, again, you--and the film--are really in favor of having the CIA.

P: I think you have to. In other words, I wish the world was such that you didn't have to, but I'm not naive enough to believe that there isn't an intelligence gathering service in every other country, and I think that being the case, we have no choice but to have one. The fact that the CIA is corrupt I totally agree with, but the abstract idea of having an intelligence gathering service in a country like the United States--well, I think you have to. I really do.

M: What script changes were made as a result of the CIA revelations?

P: None, I promise you. We didn't try to jump on the headlines at all. First of all, we were too late. We started shooting the picture in October. The story began to break in December. We were four weeks from finishing the movie. We had shot the whole set-up, the whole plot, we were locked. We couldn't, all of a sudden, start changing scenes; we couldn't.

M: But it was a movie that was influenced by Watergate--it never would have been made ten years ago.

P: No, it wouldn't. Oh, absolutely. It had to do with Watergate, Chile--we knew about Allende, that had happened. We knew about links between Hunt, Colson, Magruder, those guys in the CIA. And we knew that one of the things Hunt was accused of was leaking CIA plots to book companies, to write mystery stories. That's absolutely fact.

M: Of course, the other reason why the film is approached on political terms by some people, including myself, is because of the presence of Redford. He is a very political--liberal--actor, and it is not hard to think that he was attracted to the project because of what it had to say, politically, about the CIA.

P: That was one of the reasons he was attracted to the project. But the basic reason, to be honest with you, and I hate to disappoint everybody, but the real reason he wanted to do it was because it was the kind of movie neither of us had ever made before. It was a thriller, it was contemporary. □

THE STORY OF ADELE H.

The Twilight of Romanticism

--Michael Klein

THE QUEST FOR A ROMANTIC IDEAL OF LOVE

If we view STORY OF ADELE H., Truffaut's latest film, in relation to his previous work, especially JULES AND JIM and TWO ENGLISH GIRLS, the outlines of a developing critique of romanticism appear.

Several years ago an English film critic, Thomas Elsaesser, noted contradictions in Truffaut's characters' commitment to romantic quests for intense personal relationships: "Truffaut's heroes are romantics, and they cultivate spontaneity. Yet their desire to live an emotion as fully as possible, and to explore private fantasies tends to engross them in a closed universe. This often leads by its exclusiveness to a behavior that all but degrades their romanticism and makes them appear as cruelly inadequate."

Many examples from Truffaut's work come to mind. Pierre Lachenay in THE SOFT SKIN is a French academic who leaves his wife to chase after an airline stewardess; she finally comes to the recognition that marriage would be foolish for both of them. In SUCH A GORGEOUS KID LIKE ME the young protagonist blindly ignores his young secretary to defend the honor of Camille Bliss, a female Mack the Knife. Or Louis' quest after the femme fatale in MISSISSIPPI MERMAID. All these efforts are essentially self-destructive. Claude's intense involvement with the two sisters in TWO ENGLISH GIRLS ends in weary middle age, the three lovers never coming to any significant understanding of the objects of their affections or of the complexities of the *menage à trois*. In DAY FOR NIGHT Alphonse is ridiculous in his quest for a combination wife, mistress, nurse and little sister--the women realize he only sees them as object-fantasies; the title of the film, in French LA NUIT AMERICAINE, further underlines the theme of romantic illusion taken for reality.

In JULES AND JIM, two men travel from Paris to an Adriatic island to view the face of a statue they have seen in a slide show at a friend's house--it is a "tranquil" and "disdainful" sculpture of a woman. Returning to Paris, Jules falls in love with Catherine because she "had the same face as the statue on the island... The occasion took on a dreamlike quality." Catherine becomes the central person in Jules' and Jim's lives for nearly twenty years, yet is rarely clearly perceived as a person by either of the men. Jules says that she is: "a Queen"; "a real woman whom all men desire"; "a force of nature." Truffaut has added that Catherine is an "über-fraulein." In these statements Catherine is transmuted into a romantic personification, however positive the ideal. Yet Jules is equally capable of quoting Baudelaire's chauvinist sentiments: "Woman is natural, therefore abominable... I have always been astonished that women are allowed in Churches. What can they have to say to God?" Both the romantic and the reductive mystifications reflect oppressive cultural stereotypes that function as a matrix, limiting Catherine's options for action, growth and expression.

Having idealized Catherine, Jules and Jim tend to ignore her as a person, except for the times when she is a "catalyzer of beautiful relationships" (Truffaut's comment)--the scenes in which they romp and play together. For example in one scene Jules and Jim sit at a table completely absorbed in a game of dominos. Excluded from the men's game Catherine launches into a monologue about Napoleon being her lover, slaps Jules to get his attention, then pulls a series of expressions, the final one (a very uncharacteristic Marilyn Monroe sort of pose) held in a freeze frame.

A similar scene takes place after the war, when Jules and Catherine, now married and living in Germany, are visited by Jim. Jules and Jim sit at a table absorbed in each other's stories about the war years. Excluded from the conversation, Catherine (also excluded from her home nation by virtue of marriage) breaks in with a monologue about the virtues of French wine. Then she dashes out, asking Jim to chase her, thus initiating their affair.

In both cases Catherine has been relegated to the role of idealized decorative onlooker (however avant-garde and romantic the idealization). She asserts her identity and right to participate but can only do so in ways that are essentially "feminine" (she is not a Napoleon but his mistress, the Marilyn Monroe pose, the flirtatious appeal to Jim) and destructive (slapping Jules, beginning another adulterous affair).

FREE WOMAN OF THE DEVIL'S PARTY

It is a characteristic of Truffaut's films that the free woman tends to be of the devil's party. Insofar as she is only able to assert her identity within the confines of romantic and sexist conceptions, her rebellion takes destructive forms.

In THE SOFT SKIN the wife kills her husband, to avenge his betrayal of their love. Jeanne Moreau also is an avenger in THE BRIDE WORE BLACK. She engineers the deaths of five men,

Isabelle Adjani as Adele H. and Truffaut in a cameo role

each embodying a different masculine attitude toward women, by transforming her clothing and hair style into that of the type of woman most likely to appeal to each of the conventional "lovers." Her disguises are both an ironic critique of the men's stereotyped romanticizations of women, and a sign that her power still resides in manipulations of those conventions.

The men have been guilty of a double crime: they killed Moreau's husband to be (her idealized, perfect, innocent love) on the day of their wedding; they act out various conventions of sexist behavior in their daily lives. In killing them Moreau strikes a blow for justice. However we also note that her actions have been motivated by romantic memory of a relationship that dated back to her childhood, and which was never fully consumated.

Moreau's role in THE BRIDE WORE BLACK is a Brechtian extension of Catherine's predicament in JULES AND JIM. In order to achieve equality in an unequal situation Catherine has to act outside the ethical norms of society. Early in the film she cheats in order to win a race across a footbridge; in retrospect we realize that she has to dress in a man's outfit in order to cavort in Paris in that manner and still be considered respectable, and that her cheating has been sanctioned by the fact that she is a woman. Later, when Jules makes his after-theater chauvinist speech ("woman is natural therefore abominable"), Catherine "protests" by jumping into the Seine--she accomplishes her aim (shocking Jules into recognition of what he has said), and asserts her intellectual equality *not* by debating Jules as an equal but by seemingly placing herself in a position of danger, threatening to do harm to herself. At the conclusion of the film she drives into a river with Jim--suicide being the only way she can fulfill her romantic quest to possess her lover. *Liebestod*, the ultimate romantic ceremony, is at the same time Catherine's final gesture of liberation.

ADELE H'S QUEST FOR LOVE AND IDENTITY

Both Truffaut's male and female characters live for an ideal of love that expresses itself in several social forms. In JULES AND JIM and TWO ENGLISH GIRLS it takes the form of relationships based purely upon love, in distinction to the conventional norms of marriage. In THE BRIDE WORE BLACK and THE STORY OF ADELE H, it takes the form of marriage based upon perfect love.

The transcendent ideal of *Liebestod* is also present in the four films, and a related concept--complete involvement with a loved one. In most cases Truffaut's characters live by a romantic ideal of love perhaps best expressed by the poet Apollinaire, to whom Truffaut has alluded. In one of his poems Apollinaire speaks of the pi-mus fish in Chinese legend who swim in couples so closely joined that the one pair of eyes suffices for the two lovers:

> Pi-mus couplés allant dans la profonde eau triste
> (Joined pi-mus fish swimming in the sad deep water)

Adele Hugo lives and dies for this ideal, and Truffaut indicates to us that she is both heroic and deluded. The film begins with somber music and credits, which define the mood of what Truffaut has called "a sad film, very sad indeed." Black swirls and an El Greco-like cityscape convey a feeling of passion and near madness before the film begins. Adele arrives in Halifax during a storm. The year is 1863, and the scene at customs is tense because the English officials are on the look-out for spies as the war against slavery is taking place in the U.S.

Adele, a woman alone in a foreign country, appears to be unusually confident and self-reliant. She sets out to make inquiries about Lt. Pinson, an English officer recently come from Guernsey to Halifax, initially stating that she is married and is making the inquiries for her sister. As the film continues we witness her telling a number of lies about her reason for asking Lt. Pinson, and share a nightmare about her sister having drowned with her husband. Clearly, Adele has travelled from Europe to Canada in quest of a lover.

Pinson, however, is shocked that she has come to court him. At first it appears that there is hope for Adele, for Pinson states that he has been hurt by her family's refusal to approve their marriage. However, after Adele convinces her parents to send a favorable letter, Pinson continues to avoid her and tells her to return home. Adele continues to pursue Pinson from place to place, insisting that she loves him and that her love would be good for him. She even arranges for a notice of their marriage to appear in the European newspapers, in the hope that a scandal will force Pinson to marry the self-proclaimed Mrs. Pinson. At night she is constantly tormented by a nightmare of her sister drowning.

In the second half of the film, as Adele continues her quest for Pinson we learn additional facts about their past relationship, and certain facts previously noted come into focus. Pinson had seduced Adele, promising marriage; as a result, she broke off an engagement with a famous poet. He thus is guilty of breach of promise, a matter of significance given the position of women in the nineteenth century. We also learn that Adele is the daughter of Victor Hugo.

At this time her behavior tends to become extreme. She voyeuristically watches Pinson in bed with his mistresses, provides him with prostitutes, and makes public offerings of money to help pay his gambling debts. Adele also ruins Pinson's impending marriage by revealing her past relationship with Pinson to the bride's parents, adding for good measure that she is pregnant (another fantasy). When Pinson is transferred to the Barbados, to escape from Adele and the scandal, she follows him to the island thousands of miles away and again proclaims herself to be his wife. She continues to do so after he is married.. Finally she is returned to Europe to live the remainder of her life in a mental clinic--gardening, composing music, and continuing to write her journal which she had begun in Halifax.

Adele H's life is an archetypal heroic but self-destructive romantic quest for perfect love in which the role of the male Petrarchan suitor is played by a "liberated woman." This is conveyed by the action, the many passages from her journal which are spoken in a stream of consciousness manner, and by her dreams. At one point she writes "Love is my religion" in her journal. After Pinson continues to reject her she makes an altar--his picture, burning candles, incense--and prays to his image. She continually dreams about her sister's death-by-drowning with her husband during their honeymoon. Adele is haunted by the ideal of *Liebestod*, in which the identities of two lovers become completely fused: "The newlyweds are buried together--even death cannot part them." She reifies love.

Adele is a romantic heroine who dares to act

like a Byron or a Shelley, and appears bizarre because nineteenth century romantic culture granted this role only to men. Her actions become extreme as she is thwarted by social constraints, as she is driven to the point of madness by internalized cultural contradictions.

PATRIARCHAL ASSUMPTIONS: TRUFFAUT'S RHETORIC

Truffaut very skillfully guides us to sympathy for Adele. In the early part of the film, when she is in Halifax chasing Pinson, her actions strike us and all the characters in the film as bizarre. Mid-way in the film it is revealed that she is the daughter of Victor Hugo. From this point on some of the characters in the film treat her with increasing respect (a bookseller, the family she is lodging with, a doctor), and we grant her greater significance although most of her more bizarre actions (procuring prostitutes for Pinson, wandering about Barbados in a cape like a sleepwalker) occur in the last half of the film.

This is partially because Truffaut has provided us with the information about the breach of promise. However it is primarily a result of our learning that she is the daughter of Victor Hugo, and of our sense that she is receiving respect for this within the film.

Truffaut's rhetoric is masterful. For as we realize our patriarchal bias--the woman becomes significant because she is the daughter of a famous male writer--we at the same time gain insight into the basis of her predicament (internalization of romantic ideals, the social and legal inequalities of nineteenth century women). A sort of catharsis takes place. As Adele is driven further beyond the limits of normal behavior, we, through the understanding of the typicality of her contradictions, come to have greater sympathy for her.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONTRADICTION

Adele's "madness" is a function of her attempt to achieve liberation within the matrices of a sexist trap, to live a life and forge an identity that is an assertion of interrelated qualities or values that are in fundamental contradiction and in turn reflect fundamental contradictions in society.

We have seen how Catherine's contradictions and internalization of romantic values compelled her to act in destructive and seemingly extreme ways. In TWO ENGLISH GIRLS Muriel responds to similar tensions by becoming frozen into a constrained inactive life. After the failure of her early romance with Claude--his mother imposed a test period of separation--she retreats to a semi-recluse life. Her attitude toward Claude vacillates between opposites--the apparent "irrational feminine" response has a logic, for it is a reflection of her acute situation. On the one hand she pledges herself to Claude forever (in chastity). When he writes after six months that he wishes to live a free bachelor life she replies: "I don't understand that expression. I'm not your sister but your wife. Whether you want it or not." However, before their separation she too resisted the ideal of marriage: "Claude, I love you. Everything is yours except what you ask of me." Subsequently she resolves to attempt to break loose of her total involvement with the memory of Claude: "I will no longer write this diary for Claude. If I do write one it will be for myself...I shall never marry." Later she does send her diary to Claude, yet after a very brief affair does not remain with him.

Adele also vacillates between the romantic ideal of complete fusion with her love (on patriarchal terms) and striking out to develop her own identity. On the one hand she pursues Pinson across the ocean, offers to unilaterally support him, unilaterally takes his name and attempts to live a form of *Liebestod* in which she is completely fused with the ideal of her lover. She writes to Pinson (after he has clearly rejected her): "My love...In giving myself to you I become your wife...I am your wife evermore." (This echoes Muriel's: "Whether you want it or not I am your wife...exactly what you want.") Adele tells Pinson: "Do with me what you wish." She asks her father to write Pinson: "Tell him I'll be a dutiful wife." She literally throws herself at Pinson. She adores him and walks through the streets to glimpse him passing.

On the other hand Adele also struggles to assert her identity through tapping the independent strength that sustained her daring violation of patriarchal conventions (her aggressively chasing the object of her desire around the world). At times she taps this source for entirely non-submissive ends. For example, note that Adele regards her journal as an important literary work--one night, in a flop house, she sleeps with it under a bed to make certain that it is not stolen. She composes music, although her father does not encourage its publication. She travels incognito to insure that if she succeeds in getting Pinson it will be a result of her own efforts. She attempts to achieve artistic success in her own right--to liberate her identity from patriarchal dependency: "I am born of a father completely unknown. I denounce the official records as a fraud of identity."

Her struggle for liberation of necessity involves inconsistencies. For example she writes at one point in her journal: "My sisters suffer in bordellos or in marriage...Let them have liberty and dignity." Later she vows to come into her own as an artist in four years, and claims to have rejected Pinson's proposal of marriage: "My work needs solitude. I would never give up the name Hugo. It is I who refused to marry him." Yet she goes to Barbados and gives herself Pinson's name.

The elements of inconsistency and irrationality (her opposition of the oppressive patriarchal Hugo identity to the submissive patriarchal Pinson identity, her claiming to have literally rejected Pinson's proposal, her many vacillations) are reflections of the acute, internalized cultural contradictions that circumscribe and fragment her quest for identity, liberty, equality and dignity.

Near the end of the film, after Adele has been brought home from Barbados, Truffaut in semi-documentary fashion moves from the 1860's to the time of her death, in 1915, during the first world war--public photographs of important events in Victor Hugo's life and a view of Adele's clinic take us up to 1915. Then Truffaut superimposes young Adele's face over the Halifax landscape, and has her speak directly to us: "That a girl shall walk over the sea to the new world to seek a lover. This I shall do."

Adele has been portrayed as an heroic figure in a tragic situation: her quest for liberation spring from romantic ideals that, given a certain society, simultaneously stimulate and frustrate, inspire and destroy.

VICTOR HUGO: THE LIMITS OF THE BOURGEOIS DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

By the time STORY OF ADELE H. concludes, Truffaut has placed Adele's predicament in a political perspective: he defines the nature of the culture and society that has structured Adele's situation, that has oppressed her. In previous films Truffaut indicated that he regards certain dates as having some sort of historical significance. In both JULES AND JIM and TWO ENGLISH GIRLS the world war one period is seen as a cultural watershed. In JULES AND JIM the tone of the film drastically shifts away from lyricism at this point--the war, somber music, ominous cars, book burnings in Germany, deaths of Jim and Catherine being signs of negative historical development. In TWO ENGLISH GIRLS the film concludes with a somber epilogue that is set just after the first world war. Anne is dead, and Muriel has disappeared from our view. Claude senses that he is old, that joy is passing out of life, thata culture which was once radical is waning. This epiphany occurs while he is attending an exhibition of sculpture--he recognizes that neither Rodin nor Balzac is now a revolutionary figure; they have been accepted by the establishment as public figures of respectability. It is also significant, as we have noted, that Adele Hugo dies in this period, the war again being a point of demarcation.

Although Truffaut's signs are primarily implicit and superstructural, there is a correlation between the negative dates in his symbolic time scheme and what may be viewed as the beginning of the post-war decadent imperialist epoch. In THE STORY OF ADELE H. Truffaut's symbolic history is especially clear. The film begins in 1863 and concludes in 1915. We are told by the narrator that 1863 is the period of the war against slavery in the U.S. Adele's father, Victor Hugo, is not only the major French romantic literary figure of the century; Truffaut lets us know that he supported the revolutions of 1848, that he fought for the abolition of slavery in the U.S. and Latin America. During most of the action of the film Victor Hugo is in political exile because of his defense of the French Republic. In a documentary epilogue that concludes the film Truffaut sketches Hugo's triumphant return to Paris in 1870, lists the political honors awarded him by the new Republic, and shows us a procession of two million people honoring Hugo after his death in 1885.

Truffaut indicates to us that Hugo's literary romanticism is an aspect of his bourgeois democratic world view. He clearly defines Hugo as a leader of the romantic cultural revolution, and as an active leader of the continuing bourgeois democratic revolutions of the nineteenth century. In Halifax Adele is in contact with a doctor and a bookseller--both discover her identity, and speak of her father's literary achievements. Later, after Adele goes to the Barbados, an ex-slave recognizes her and writes to Victor Hugo as "a friend of the oppressed." Adele is then brought back to her father in Europe by a black woman who was once a slave.

Because Victor Hugo's links with the struggles of the oppressed and exploited are highlighted by Truffaut, we experience a shock of recognition: the daughter of an abolitionist and leader of the bourgeois democratic revolution is herself unfree. The gains of the bourgeois revolution (abolition of slavery, formal democratic rights in legal and cultural spheres, formal equality in the pursuit of happiness) have not been extended to its daughters.

Near the end of the film Truffaut informs us that Victor Hugo's last words were: "I see a black light." Truffaut gives us this information in context of the disclosure that Adele lived the remainder of her life in a mental clinic, withdrawn from the society that broke her spirit. The "black light" in part is a sign of Hugo's personal (patriarchal) failure, and that the democratic revolutions to which he devoted his life did not encompass the cultural, political or economic liberation of women.

Further, by stressing the formal pomposity that surrounds Hugo in his last years (long lists of titles, burial in the Pantheon) in which he has become a prop of the new establishment, Truffaut implies that Hugo's death-bed disillusion involved a recognition that the liberating and progressive phase of the bourgeois and romantic revolutions was winding down.

This is also the sort of statement Godard made in WEEKEND, in which the French bourgeois revolution ("from the French revolution to a weekend with De Gaulle") and romanticism (the modern bourgeois philistines, insensitive to metaphor, burn Emily Bronte for her statement, "Cover flowers with flames") are viewed as inoperative in a society that is reverting to fascist decadence and barbarism. "Black light" however may also be viewed itself as a contradiction, as having positive and negative aspects. Especially in context of Adele's need and will to strive for something better in life.

TRUFFAUT AND CRITICAL REALISM

Truffaut comes from a working class background. He had a childhood similar to that of the hero of his semi-autobiographical THE 400 BLOWS, including working in a factory, and time in a reform school.

However, most of his films have been situated within the milieu of French bourgeois society, and have been acclaimed on the Champs Elysees and at Lincoln Center. In a sense, he has become an establishment filmmaker, apparently in the process rejecting his youthful left-wing political views. (In 1960 he signed a manifesto calling for French soldiers to desert rather than fight in the colonialist Algerian war; in May 1968 he refused to sign a manifesto in support of the general strike and student rebellion.)

In 400 BLOWS Truffaut's protagonist built an altar to Balzac. Balzac is alluded to in MISSISSIPPI MERMAID (Louis reads one of his novels); Rodin's statue of Balzac assumes heroic proportions in TWO ENGLISH GIRLS. Apparently Truffaut, in a romantic fashion, feels a sense of kinship with Balzac.

It is of interest that Marx also considered Balzac an important writer: he was not antagonistic to the establishment, but had the capacity to reflect its contradictions. Nathaniel West,

referring to this, once noted:

> Balzac...kept his eye firmly fixed on the middle class and wrote with great truth and no wish-fulfillment. The superior truth alone in Balzac was sufficient to reveal the structure of middle class society and its defects...

Truffaut has been a critical realist *auteur*. His films continually focus on questions of romanticism, happiness and the situation of men and women in middle class society. He does not offer any answers but instead presents a critical awareness of the problems.

Truffaut seems to have a good deal of sympathy with the romantic impulse. However he often shows the problematic consequences of attempts at liberation--whether they take the form of sophisticated detachment (Claude in TWO ENGLISH GIRLS), or of the reification of love, or of passionate attempts by one person (Catherine, Adele), couples (Louis and Marion in MISSISSIPPI MERMAID, Pierre and Nicole in THE SOFT SKIN) or *menages à trois* (Jules, Catherine, Jim) to achieve a solution. His critique of romanticism is thus also a caution about certain easy romantic conceptions of liberation.

Truffaut does not point to any simple solution within bourgeois society; instead he indicates difficulties and contradictions as well as possibilities. In doing so his films reflect the inability of that society to nurture or sustain viable general solutions. □

Give Em Hell, Harry

Missouri, Mon Amour

--Norman Markowitz

Red velvet everywhere in New York's plush Ziegfield Theater. Ushers in black bow ties and ruffled shirts. The occasion is GIVE EM HELL, HARRY, Bill Sargeant's filmed record of a live Washington performance: James Whitmore's one-man attempt to do for Harry Truman what others have done for Mark Twain, Will Rogers, and Clarence Darrow.

Inside, I find an audience that is predominantly middle-aged and elderly, with at least three old men who bear a striking resemblance to Truman himself. After a decade of cold war criticism, anti-Vietnam agitation, and general anti-hero muckraking in national politics, why did they come? Perhaps in search of memories of better days, world wars won, and government that seemed honest, respected, and democratic. As an anti-Truman "revisionist" historian, I came for another reason: to see how the commercial media would package Truman for the American people.

Selling Truman as a basic hero product presents acute problems. How does one deal with the frightened and insecure private person, the Truman who often dodged decisions, pursued the most cynical policies, and exploded with anti-working class and anti-minority expletives when crisis overtook him? This Truman is, of course, absent from the Whitmore performance, just as he is from the popular mythology that the play-film drew upon. "A very ordinary man," Harry Truman calls himself early in the film, but he is portrayed as a remarkable brand of ordinary man who dresses down railroad union chiefs, regularly denounces the malevolence and greed of the big money, and stands up bravely and consistently for democracy against Douglas MacArthur and Joseph McCarthy.

GIVE EM HELL, HARRY exploits Truman's profanity for all its worth and aims it at all the right targets, from KKK bigots to more contemporary nefarious types like Richard Nixon. "The people," whether they be the brawling Irish artillerymen whom he commands in World War I, a Jewish buddy who becomes his haberdashery partner in Kansas City in the 1920's, or oppressed Blacks in Missouri, all are his fellows and friends, and he always stands up for them with angry courage.

(James Whitmore, hardly heroic in the tradition of Raymond Massey in ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS, Ralph Bellamy in SUNRISE AT COMPOBELLO, Alexander Knox in WILSON, or even Cliff Robertson in PT-109, nevertheless is a humorous, apoplectically explosive Truman. His characterization, perhaps a bit overdrawn for the transition from stage to screen, does capture well the Truman idiom and speech inflections.)

In reality, Truman the man was perhaps more a Willy Loman who made it than a cracker barrel Mr. Smith Goes to Washington. The play-film abides instead by the myth and pictures Truman, in the context of the culture of the 1940's, as a sort of Fibber McGee, a common man comedian. Closing my eyes during the scene of Truman at home in Missouri, mowing the lawn at the behest of a wife he calls "the Boss," I picked up on both the rhythms and the audience laughter of old radio situation comedy.

Even Truman's perpetual harangues against the high hats and politicians of the world ring true to the sentiments of the Good for Nothing Middle American folk figure of yesteryear, Fibber McGee. The film's most important message follows: that the common folks, if they have faith in themselves collectively and a proper distrust of high hats, can reach the heights and yet remain true to their best hopes. Truman's comments to the people as he leaves office at the end of the film, "My promotion is to be one of you," eloquently and perfectly reflects this theme.

People need to feel patriotic, to identify with the positive things in their society, so perhaps an idealized, egalitarian Truman has its reasons. Nevertheless, the producers of GIVE EM HELL, HARRY demonstrate unforgivable contempt for their audience by virtually ignoring the important events of the Truman presidency, i.e. the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, NATO, the Truman Loyalty and Security program, the Smith Act arrest of Communist Party leaders, and the anti-labor Taft-Hartley law. Insofar as the A bomb decision and US-Soviet general relations are touched, these appear weakly in an imaginary conversation between Truman and the ghost of FDR, a conversation that tells the audience nothing except that Truman had a mild distrust of Stalin at Potsdam and no regrets about using the bomb. The film's treatment of the complex Korean War is limited to the Truman-MacArthur controversy, and then only to the public relations account of a petulant, autocratic general first misleading and then rebelling against an honest, peace-loving president. Finally, the film shows Truman denouncing Joe McCarthy as "Mack the Knife," and making the incredible boast, "I took on that most lamentable mistake of the All-mighty every chance I got." In such ways does history really become a pack of tricks played on the dead, especially the dead from Hiroshima to blacklisted Hollywood.

To continue: on screen, Truman risks his life to confront Klu Klux Klan enemies at a closed Klan meeting and uses a quote from his Jewish partner, Eddie Jacobson, to humiliate them. In reality, Truman was not too averse to receiving KKK political support and only publicly repudiated it when the Klan warned him against appointing Catholic friends of the Catholic Pendergast machine, his principal backers in the race for Jackson County judge. Truman's relationship with Pendergast is portrayed in terms of an understanding whereby the Big Boss respected the honesty and integrity of his handpicked county administrator and United States Senator. In reality, the crime-syndicate-connected Pendergast machine used Harry Truman, its major political bread winner, to consolidate its power, first in Kansas City and then in Missouri as a whole. Truman's patronage appointments, especially his use of Senatorial courtesy to influence the choice of WPA administrators, gave Pendergast much of his power during the New Deal, and Harry did everything he could to hinder the federal investigation that finally brought the Big Boss down and sent him to jail in 1939. After Pendergast's fall, Truman made an alliance with Robert Hannigan, a major figure in the less flamboyantly corrupt St. Louis machine. As Democratic National Chairman in 1944, Hannigan was instrumental in the behind-the-scenes wirepulling that gave Truman the vice-presidential nomination over the New Deal incumbent, Henry Wallace.

As the diaries of Henry Wallace and other public figures show, Truman often distrusted Jews with the suspicions of a small town gentile businessman and feared Blacks before, during and after his presidency. Yet he took support from both groups, who were significant factors in the New Deal liberal-labor coalition that he precariously held together while presiding over the creation and development of the Cold War. Concerning the major group within the coalition, the industrial workers, Truman had praise in the abstract (which is recounted in the film) undercut by petit-bourgeois hostility to their practical struggles and their politicized labor movement (even though that movement was the decisive factor in his 1948 election). Perhaps the most frightening open attack made in the postwar era directly on the working class movement was Truman's threat to draft the railroad strikers of 1946 into the army if they did not return to work. In a section of his draft speech to Congress that was cut out by his political advisors, Truman sounded more like Hitler than Jimmy Stewart in MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON when he said "Every single one of the strikers and their demigog (sic) leaders have been living in luxury, working when they pleased and drawing from four to forty times the pay of a fighting soldier. Now I want you men who are my comrades-in-arms, you men who fought the battle to save the nation just as I did 25 years ago, to come with me and eliminate the Lewises, the Whitneys, the Johnstons, the Communist Bridges and the Russian Senators and Representatives and really make this a government of, by, and for the people. Let's put transportation and production back to work, hang a few traitors and make our own country safe for democracy." Neither these words nor any others like them uttered by Truman appear in James Whitmore's mixture of passionate and funny HST monologues. Yet, they are as much a part of Truman as are his attacks on Wall Street and big business, and they are, tragically, a far more accurate gauge to his presidency and times than GIVE EM HELL, HARRY, a warm and occasionally moving one-man soap opera manufactured for the American people and presented to them in an appropriately cheap process called Theatrovision. □

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Swept Away...

from p. 1

transformation from caveman type to tender admirer who acknowledges the all importance of devotion and caring. But does Rafaella come to love him as an equal and for qualities other than his sadism and his wanton and arbitrary exercise of power? On the contrary, she adores him exclusively *for* his brutality. She yields to her feelings for him after he has butchered a rabbit and prepares to roast it: "You're cruel," she whispers seductively, and kisses his feet. From that moment on, the couple are lovers. Wertmuller, we can only conclude, has here effected a refinement on the male sexual fantasy. If the man were to give "it" to the woman first and receive her abject devotion after, she might be suspected of having, for a time, used him in some small way; this way, before he gives her anything he must own her, body, mind, heart, and soul.

The next surprise, according to Garson, occurs when Gennarino finds himself loving Rafaella. It's true that while he never allows her to call him anything but Mr. Carrunchio, the beatings become fewer and less severe (in this world, alas, women must be content with small favors); however, he certainly never loves Rafaella, person in her own right, but only her bondage to him and the creature he himself has shaped and molded: right up to the end Rafaella is always in for a slap and a scolding when she uses her own judgment and free choice--for example, when she decides not to hail a passing ship.

Nothing in the film tells us that we should be offended by this state of affairs. Rafaella is clearly improved by her experience, at least in the eyes of the camera. No longer the shrill harpy talking "like a fascist," she becomes tender, giving, soft-looking and soft-spoken. The camera lingers lovingly on her beauty--all taut lines gone from her face, a wreath of fresh little pink flowers in her golden hair. Close-ups of the two smiling tenderly at each other are frequent. Moreover, the island which first looked formidable and ugly later appears paradisiacal, and there are long shots of the heavenly blue sea in August. The music, too, always one of the best elements of a Wertmuller film, changes from sharp and savagely satirical tones to light and almost sentimental ones. Even after the pair is "rescued," and class roles supposedly reassert themselves, Rafaella is a changed and better woman: she has learned to cry, has learned to feel for others, has learned to shut up.

Not only from the change which takes place in Rafaella after her subjugation do we get clear understanding of Wertmuller's opinions about what women need and what they should be, but also from the contrast between the later Rafaella and Gennarino's Sicilian wife, who appears on the scene after the "rescue." At this point, I believe we can establish beyond a shade of doubt that Wertmuller has *no* political message, and certainly not a feminist one. Let me say bluntly (for there is no generous way of putting it) that Wertmuller despises women who are not beautiful. After watching so many shots of the lovely Rafaella, the audience can't help but guffaw at the sight of the overweight, slatternly Sicilian, with an absurd little top knot on her head, clumsily racing toward the reluctant Gennarino, greeting him too loudly and in an unpleasantly shrill voice. Gennarino's earlier words about Sicilian women being on a perpetual diet due to their poverty, which seemed to introduce a political message, are effectually blotted out. The wife is used as a symbol of all the horrors to which Gennarino must now return. A comparison with one of Wertmuller's earlier films, THE SEDUCTION OF MIMI, is in order. Mimi, the hero, is driven to redress his lost honor by seducing the wife of his own wife's seducer. We can apply the words of the *Newsweek* reviewer we quoted earlier to MIMI: "In its most simplistic terms the plot is outrageous and an insult to feminists."

There is a second level at which this works. Wertmuller is undoubtedly poking fun at the Italian male macho mentality, since the "cuckholded" hero has not only been unfaithful to his wife, but has set up house with his mistress and fathered a child by her, whereas his wife has only indulged in a one night stand after much persuasion and out of extreme loneliness. However, a third level of interpretation brings us full circle and persuades us that as feminists we are indeed being insulted. For the satire is effected at the expense of the most innocent party, the woman through whom Mimi gets back at his wife's seducer. She is a middle-aged, overweight woman who at first repeatedly repels Mimi's advances until he comes increasingly importunate and so convincingly persuades her of his desperate love that she finally yields to him. The bedroom scene is one of the most gratuitously misogynistic I have ever seen. The shots continually cut back and forth from the hero's agonized face to the mounds of flesh which emerge as the woman slowly peels off her clothes. Then, as he lies quaking with fear, she lumbers towards him, her face contorted with lust, and falls heavily upon him. The audience goes wild. So here Wertmuller spoofs the hero's extreme macho pride by showing how it lands him in bed with this monstrous grotesque. That the woman is a human being, that she is, actually, the most wronged person in the movie, are points disputed by the antics of the camera and lost in the raucous laughter of the audience.

As in most Wertmuller films, the cameras insistently stress the contrast between beautiful and ugly women--exploring as if in horrible fascination the bodies and faces of the pudgy, graceless "Sicilian types" Wertmuller abhors, and then turning from such scenes to dwell long and voluptuously on gorgeous Mariengela Melato (the actress who portrays Rafaella in SWEPT AWAY... and the mistress in MIMI). For Wertmuller, physical beauty often seems to equal the good, and ugliness, evil; and, particularly in SWEPT AWAY..., the unlovely woman is scarcely more than a thing, an embodiment of the sordid reality from which the hero cannot, finally escape.

We have one further point to consider. Is Wertmuller, as Garson suggests, criticizing Gennarino's masculine pride when she has him insist upon leaving the island to put Rafaella's love to the test? It hardly matters this late in the game. Our point about the film's anti-feminism is proved regardless of whether we condemn or condone Gennarino's action, for in either case we are presupposing his right to decide all by himself upon the proper course of his and Rafaella's lives. Thus, if we say Gennarino is justified in wanting Rafaella to prove her love, then we must conclude that Wertmuller is not, even here, challenging the male's prerogative to possess the woman totally. If, on the other hand, we feel Gennarino is wrong to risk losing Rafaella, we wind up agreeing with the film's assessment of woman, that, given free will, she will always choose the comforts of her position over the meaningful relationship the film tries to present (unsuccessfully, I hope I have shown). And so, following out the logic to its bitter conclusion, we would have to claim that Gennarino should not have given Rafaella the least bit of freedom, but kept her, isolated and in bondage, all to himself.

I probably would never have written this critique had I not been moved to do so by the incredible rave reviews SWEPT AWAY... has received, many of them, to my dismay, extolling the film's virtues on quasi-feminist grounds. Most, I suspect, were written in good faith, with the reviewers projecting their own feminist consciousnesses onto the work of the world's most renowned filmmaker. But I fear that some of the film's "feminist" defenses only indicate that we have developed more sophisticated means for justifying our titillation at seeing women put down. □

The Pied Piper
NEO-MARXIST FAIRY TALE

--Reynold Humphries

When I went to see Jacques Demy's film (made in England in 1971) one weekday afternoon at a Paris cinema, a considerable proportion of the audience was comprised of parents and young children who were doubtless expecting a fairy-story with nice songs from Donovan and pretty post-card sets. (Demy is probably best known in the U.S. for THE UMBRELLAS OF CHERBOURG, made in 1964.) What they got was as far removed from expectations as one could imagine, for THE PIED PIPER is built almost exclusively on class antagonisms.

The main event in the plot is the marriage between Franz, the Baron's son, and Lisa, the Mayor's daughter, seen purely and simply as a marriage of convenience: she hates him and he is interested only in the dowry. Demy and his fellow scriptwriters do not waste time on this relationship, however, but concentrate on the political intrigues behind it. These are centered on the Baron and the Mayor.

The Baron is engaged in building a splendid cathedral, encouraged by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Hamelin. But there's a problem: he's broke. How can he raise more money? He can borrow from the Pope, levy more taxes or get the men to do the work for nothing. The arrival of the Papal Nuncio allows him to broach the first possibility. Unfortunately the Nuncio has other things in mind: he has come to ask the Baron to raise an army to help the Pope fight the Emperor in Italy (the Pope wants a new Emperor as much as the Emperor wants a new Pope...). The army will be paid for, but as the work-force will be away fighting, there will be nobody left to build the cathedral, undertaken by the Baron as an act likely to enable him to buy his way out of Hell, if not actually into Heaven. Impasse.

The second and third possibilities bring in economics and the class struggle more directly: taxes on the poor to subsidize those weapons used to subjugate them (religion and war, here religious wars) and the threat of refusing to pay the workers, considered valid as times were hard and "even masons have to eat."

The Baron tries to solve the dilemma by forcing the Mayor to advance him the money he would be getting from the dowry. But the Mayor has already advanced a considerable portion of it to enable the Baron to pay ransom money for Franz, captured after yet another of his disastrous private wars, and now has financial problems of his own. So he, too, tries to levy new taxes, only to find that everything is already taxed. When he suggests sugar, one of the members of the town council points out that they are the only ones to eat sugar. Impasse.

Franz tries to solve the problem by getting Melius the Jew to fabricate fool's gold to pay the workers. This is a striking metaphor for the function of money in present capitalist society. Lacking any real value, its worth depends exclusively on the intervention of the capitalist. Thus paper becomes money, although its arbitrary value can vary according to circumstances, thus foregrounding its artificial nature (German inflation in the 1920's is the best example of this). Melius, however, refuses to cooperate as he is concerned with something far more important in his eyes: the presence of rats and hence of the plague.

The plague threatens to upset the existing "delicate political situation" (the words are the Mayor's): the townspeople demand action, but the Church sees the plague as something sent by God to punish people for their depravity, not the result of natural causes. Thus they burn Melius for insisting on the latter; he is, of course, a Jew, not a Catholic. Not only does the Mayor have the Church to contend with, but his financial problems too. He must hire men to rid the town of rats, but to do so would infuriate not only the Bishop, but also the Baron who needs the men to build the cathedral... Impasse.

The Pied Piper has a solution: for 1000 guilders he will rid the town of rats by playing his pipe. The Mayor agrees and the rats are duly drowned. But the Mayor refuses to pay. The job wasn't worth more than 50 guilders and anyway, if the Piper gets 1000, what about the poor and the sick? They deserve it too. Thus a favorite capitalist device of divide and rule is brought into play. The Mayor is ready to squeeze the last penny out of the people in order to live well and avoid the contradictions inherent in the problems surrounding the Baron, the Church and himself. When it actually comes to paying a man for his labor, however, he appeals to the very people he is exploiting to justify non-payment. By making the people envious and the Piper seem to be greedy, the Mayor creates a situation where two sectors of the exploited proletariat are set against each other, to the benefit of the capitalist: no money paid and the people satisfied.

The next day, as Melius is being burned, the Piper leaves town, playing his pipe, and charms

all the children away. What is crucial here is that no revenge motive is advanced in the film, as opposed to the legend. Here the Piper leads off the children, not to punish the townspeople, but to save the children (with whom, as the film has shown on more than one occasion, he has a good relationship). For the plague strikes the town after Melius is dead, the first victim being Franz. Thus the Church's position is exposed for the lie it is: burning Melius hasn't saved Hamelin any more than its call for prayers, processions and flagellations.

The ideological flaw of THE PIED PIPER lies in the makers' inability to adopt a precise attitude towards the function of Christianity. On the one hand the driving force in the film is seen to be the class struggle: bourgeoisie vs. proletariat; the Baron, the Mayor and the Church vs. the people, the Pied Piper and Melius. (I list Melius as a member of the proletariat because he is not in control of the production and distribution of wealth, although, as a scientist, he is *privileged*, being on the "right" side of the division between manual and intellectual labor.) On the other hand, the driving force is religion; the film ends with a caption on the religious persecutions that followed the Black Death. There is a splendid moment during the wedding ceremony where the cake--ironically in the *completed* form of the *unfinished* cathedral--is discovered to be full of rats. It falls apart and they are inside, thus linking Christianity to the plague and making religion responsible for everything.

This is a common attitude in certain left-wing circles and is understandable, given the role played by Christianity through the ages. But Demy and the other scriptwriters, by giving voice to their anti-clericalism, are forgetting the very lesson they are making in the film: power politics and economics are what control and determine everything, with religion being used as a weapon to impose the control of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. Christianity is therefore a part of the ideological superstructure produced by a given economic base. Everything in THE PIED PIPER points to this and all the relationships worked out in the film are exclusively class-oriented, even if the story-line--as opposed to the network of meanings produced by the discourse itself--tends to privilege religion.

It is striking to see how personal, individual relations are underplayed in THE PIED PIPER (apart from that between Lisa and the boy she loves, Gavin, Melius's assistant, who, significantly, is a member of the proletariat). Everything is seen in class terms: the Baron, the Mayor and the Bishop *inside*, plotting behind closed doors; the people, kept in fear and ignorance, *outside* (a neat metaphor for class antagonisms). The dominant discourse will probably put the film down as a barely competent follow-up to PEAU D'ANE (minus the pretty images). THE PIED PIPER deserves to be remembered as a very strange hybrid indeed: a neo-Marxist fairy-tale. □

Monte Hellman Interviewed

CORMAN AND *COCKFIGHTER*

--Nicholas Pasquariello

BEAST FROM HAUNTED CAVE (1960)
BACKDOOR TO HELL (1965)
FLIGHT TO FURY (1965)
THE SHOOTING (1966)
RIDE IN THE WHIRLWIND (1966)
TWO LANE BLACKTOP (1971)
BORN TO KILL (COCKFIGHTER) (1975)

As evidenced by the list above, Monte Hellman's career as a film director has been a spotty affair, at best. On the face of it his record of seven features completed in fifteen years seems fairly typical for an industry where the planning and shooting of a picture takes about two years on the average. However, on closer examination one finds that just over half (or five) of Hellman's pictures were very short (less than two week) schedule, low budget (under $100,000) productions. This kind of picture does not take two years to plan and execute.

Why hasn't Monte Hellman directed more pictures? One rather conjectural answer is that he has had trouble finding script material that he wants to work with, and--at the same time--which his potential producers have been willing to bankroll him to direct. When he has had some control over his script material--and consequently ended up with a screenplay he was reasonably satisfied with--the results have always been interesting (FLIGHT TO FURY, TWO LANE BLACKTOP), or even extraordinary (THE SHOOTING, RIDE IN THE WHIRLWIND).

Indeed, in the latter two pictures, Hellman has succeeded in transcending his material, and bringing to two adventure stories mythic as well as existential elements rarely, if ever, seen in the American film; the characters here are in search of mysterious, unconquerable forces (perhaps their very souls) which are always just beyond their reach. Yet they are driven on to the very edge of life itself in their search.

In search. Perhaps more than any other two words, these sum up the theme of Monte Hellman's work. The search for what mysterious forces motivate men to greed (FLIGHT TO FURY), to compete (TWO LANE BLACKTOP, COCKFIGHTER), to understand the nature of life and death (RIDE IN THE WHIRLWIND, THE SHOOTING).

One can only wish Hellman the best of luck in searching for script material that he feels close to, and which his potential producers think will make money at the box office. This, in truth, has been a difficult task for Monte Hellman to date.

P: Could you describe how your current film, COCKFIGHTER, came to be made?

H: Roger (Corman) gave me the script to read, and I liked it immediately, and I said that I would like to do it. In January, I began working on the script, I hired a writer to do some dialogue polish. Early in March, I went to New York, because the picture was to be as fully as possible cast out of New York, largely for economic reasons. Then I spent three weeks in Georgia, before we started to shoot, and we spent four weeks shooting, and we spent an extremely short time editing--it was very fast. The editor (Lewis Teague) and I worked on it in separate cutting rooms so that he cut half the picture and I cut half the picture.

P: Was that an economy move?

H: No, it was a time move: we had a release date that made it impossible for me to work on the first cut on the entire picture. Normally I cut my own pictures and do everything from beginning to end. In this picture there wasn't enough time for me to do that.

P: Did you know that going into the picture?

H: I knew that in front, yes.

P: Was there a significant disadvantage to working that way?

H: Not a bit, because as it turns out, he's an excellent editor. We hadn't worked together before, but we saw eye to eye on most things and he made suggestions about the scenes that I had cut. We really worked as a team. Essentially what he cut were the most difficult scenes, the cockfighting scenes. His major experience had been in the documentary field, so I felt that he was better qualified to do those scenes than I was.

P: How did you get Nestor Almendros as your Director of Photography on COCKFIGHTER?

H: I guess he had worked for Roger before, and he was an acquaintance of mine. He's a beautiful person, and he's terrific to work with: he's fast, and he couldn't be better.

P: Was the whole crew American?

H: The rest of the crew was American, unfortunately....It would have been much better if he had brought over his own assistant and his own gaffer because they were people he had worked with before and who understood his way of working. We were slowed down by the problem that the people working with him weren't familiar with his methods, and also by the fact that they were really the most inexperienced crew that we could have had. They were fresh out of film school, and some of them were just incompetent, particularly the camera crew. I wasn't happy with the crew except for Nestor; he was terrific.

P: Do you think it affected the way the picture looks?

H: Oh, yeah; for one thing we lost a lot of scenes because of bad focus and things like that, so you have to make editorial decisions based on the material that you have. It also affected us because we had less time to shoot because of the inefficiency of the crew. On a four week schedule you have to be pretty damn efficient, and if you're loosing two hours a day because of fuck-ups, that's a lot of time to loose.

P: What was Almendros' feeling about the situation?

H; He's such a good hearted person that he just accepted it. He's really the most easy going, forgiving person I've ever met in my life. He just said, "Well, too bad."

P: Is that the way you reacted to this situation?

H: No, no; I was furious. I tried to fire half the crew but I would have had to pay their salaries if I did. They would have had to have been paid for the full four weeks (because of their contracts); I would have had to have paid the extra transportation to bring somebody else out. It would have taken my whole salary to replace the crew.

P: Did Corman hire the crew?

H: Yes. Which is also unusual for me. Usually I have control over the crew, which I hire myself. On every other picture that I've made I've hand selected the crew.

P: Did you have much hesitancy in accepting this whole arrangement?

H: No, because I wanted to make the film. I had a hard time finding a film I wanted to make--I like the material. I just accepted the limitations as part of the deal. I knew it wouldn't be a perfect experience.

P: You would think that after all these years Corman would know how to put together a good crew.

H: It's not a question of good, it's a question of...cheap. He knows how to make a picture for the budget that he wants to spend.

P: What was the budget for COCKFIGHTER?

H: The budget was in the neighborhood of $400,-000, but I think it cost considerably less because he was so good at cutting all these corners.

P: Shouldn't one be able to hire a competent crew on that kind of budget?

H: Right, sure, but he was just so used to making pictures for $150,000, that he hired the crews the same way that he did when he would do that kind of picture.

P: Do you know if Almendros got paid anything like his regular salary?

H: I think so. He got paid more than we would have had to pay a cameraman here. That was one exception; Roger just wanted him and was willing to pay for him.

P: Does Corman share any of your feelings about the ineptness of the crew?

H: No, he doesn't. I don't know if he's ever worked with a good crew; it doesn't bother him. (laughter) It's all relative anyway. I wasn't really happy with the camera operator on TWO LANE BLACKTOP but I found a way to work with him so that I wasn't affected by problems that he presented. What it does, it affects the style of the film in a subtle way.

P: What was your relationship with Corman in terms of the editing of the fine cut of COCKFIGHTER?

H: After I finished editing the picture he has made changes in the picture without my knowledge. He brought in another editor and made further modifications of the film.

During the actual editing in many cases he was just trying to pick up the pace. In some cases he wanted the cockfighting to be cut together in such a way as to make it more brutal and more bloody; and at one point had some second unit footage of blood shot and inserted into the film. And then he discovered that audiences were repulsed by this and he took some of that out.

P: Did you run previews?

H: We had one preview.

P: And that was when he discovered that audiences were repulsed by the blood?

H: Right.

P: What did they do? Were you there?

H: Yeah, I was there. They went, "Oooh...." In actuality, there is very little blood in cockfighting, and they (Corman) inserted blood that was really unrealistic.

P: So it sounds as if you're saying that Corman's pressure on you during editing had some bad effects, as well as some good ones.

H: Normally I enjoy that kind of conflict with a producer because it forces you to satisfy him and yourself at the same time. I liked being forced to find a way to say the same thing only more economically, with a faster pace. We had a problem that was built into the script where the story didn't really get started until about forty minutes into it--what little story there is. Consequently, everything that happened before that point seems slow. There was a lot of good material. At the same time it didn't really hold the audience as well as things that happen after the major questions are raised. We knew that we had a problem there. We knew all that material had to be cut down as much as possible. He found ways to cut it down even more. He kept saying, "Maybe you can trim this, maybe you can trim that;" and in that area he's very good. I found it stimulating to work with him along those lines.

P: Do you have any specific things which you like to make clear to a cameraman when you begin a shoot?

H: It depends on the cameraman. I tend toward a kind of realistic documentary style in costuming, choice of actors, and in camera. So if I'm working with a cameraman whose natural bent is away from that I will try to influence him to lean to what I want. With a cameraman like Nestor (Almendros) whose natural bent is almost further along those lines than my natural bent, it's really a question of telling him how far I want to go toward meeting him. Let's for the sake of argument say that naturalistic photography (or naturalistic directing) is the left, and theatrical style is the right. Well, I would say that Nestor is even more left than I am, so I just had to be sure that the final result wasn't going to be too left wing. (laughter)

P: How was (Gregory) Sandor in that regard? (Sandor was cameraman on THE SHOOTING and RIDE IN THE WHIRLWIND.)

H: He's further right than I am, so I have to bring him over to the left a little bit.

P: How do you do that?

H: Just by talk.

P: You find that consideration is also involved in working with actors?

H: Yes, though...because in a sense actors are less flexible than cameramen or directors. An actor really only has himself, and if you choose a certain actor you have to accept what he has to give you. Hopefully you'll select an actor whose style fits the role he's playing. I don't mean whose personality or whose type fits the role. I mean whose style of acting fits the role. Some actors are more theatrical and some actors are more documentary in style.

P: How would you define a documentary style of acting?

H: If you're totally unaware that the person is an actor. Some roles can be played by actors who are obviously actors, and you enjoy them for the fact that they are obviously actors; and the character himself then becomes a theatrical person, just as many people in life are theatrical and other people are less so. I think the character of GTO in TWO LANE BLACKTOP is a theatrical character, and it wouldn't have been proper for Warren (Oates) to have played him non-theatrically, let's say. Whereas the driver and the mechanic and the girl, had they been theatrical, would have struck a false note. The one character (GTO) in the film is bigger than life, so it's the role in the film that could not have been played by an inexperienced actor.

P: Or could not have been played in a non-theatrical or documentary style.

H: That's right.

P: How do THE SHOOTING and RIDE IN THE WHIRLWIND fit into this scheme of things?

H: In THE SHOOTING all the characters are bigger than life. The whole thing is painted with primary colors on a grand scale. It's not really a documentary style film at all; it's bordering very closely on satire. The character that Jack Nicholson plays is really a take-off on the character that Jack Palance plays in SHANE. In COCKFIGHTER the style is very documentary and the whole picture could have been cast with non-professionals. As it turns out, Warren is able to act in either style and he fit in with many of the real people in the film. But a real cockfighter could have played the part too, though not as well. Essentially FLIGHT TO FURY and THE SHOOTING are films about other films rather than films about life.

P: What films of yours are films about life?

H: COCKFIGHTER, RIDE IN THE WHIRLWIND; I think TWO LANE BLACKTOP is neither. It's a film about inner life rather than outer life. But it's not a film about other films; it's not a pastiche.

P: How did you work on the script of COCKFIGHTER?

H: COCKFIGHTER was a script that was presented to me. It was already completed, and I was allowed to hire another writer to do a small amount of rewriting and then I did a lot of editing on the script. I didn't really have the advantage of working with a writer from the beginning of it.

P: How much time did you have to work on the script?

H: About six weeks.

P: Were you happy with the final script?

H: Not completely. I would have preferred having had a more complete rewrite. It was really a matter of basic structure which just didn't exist, and there wasn't really much that we could do to alter that at the time that I came into it. It would have taken as thorough a rewrite as we did on TWO LANE BLACKTOP. On TWO LANE I literally threw out the first script, hired another writer, and started all over again. If we'd done that with COCKFIGHTER we probably could have found a way to give it those qualities (of being larger than life). I didn't have the freedom to do that (on COCKFIGHTER). I was fortunate with TWO LANE....in that the studio (Universal) accepted by desire to do it completely over.

P: What exactly was the problem with completely rewriting COCKFIGHTER?

H: The producers just weren't interested. As it was they weren't very interested in my doing a dialogue polish on it.

I don't think a film can ever be the same kind of experience for me when it begins with a script that's given to me as opposed to its beginning with a blank piece of paper. They're two different ways to make a film, and I'm much happier starting with a blank piece of paper than I am with a script that I'm not really free to tamper with that much.

Essentially, the experience of filmmaking for me is one of constant discovery. If I know too much in advance I just tend to become disinterested sooner. The ideal situation for me is working on a film like THE SHOOTING or even TWO LANE BLACKTOP where there are so many unconscious things happening in the creation of it that even after finishing the editing and mixing, and the making of the final print, I can go to see the film and still find new things in it. That to me is a stimulating experience. I like to work on a film like that where it's continually opening up its secrets to me. I think that any work of art, not just a film, is a mystery. I think it was Cocteau who said that it should reveal its secrets slowly. □

The Cockfighter (Born to Kill)

The Glamor of Individualism

--John Hess

I find Monte Hellman's films, such as THE SHOOTING, TWO LANE BLACKTOP, FLIGHT TO FURY, both fascinating and frustrating. I'm never sure whether the dialogue is a parody of the dialogue in bad "B" pictures or just plain bad. Because of their crazy unconventionality, the visuals always interest and absorb me, but they usually don't lead anywhere. Hellman's symbols are both obvious and complex: clear what they are, unclear what they mean. While Hellman always seems to be going against the grain of Hollywood cinema, I don't like his alternative: a vicious, hopeless cynicism. In spite of all this ambiguity, or perhaps because of it, I always go back to see his films and I'm always entertained at the same time that I'm incensed.

In part, I think I enjoy these films because I grew up in the 1950's surrounded by romantic/existential heroes and anti-heroes, from Tarzan and the Lone Ranger to Kerouac, the Beats, Henry Miller, and Lawrence Durrell. These narratives and many others like them evoked in me a vivid, introspective fantasy world dominated by extreme individualism and nearly constant motion--one the function of the other. As a kid reading Tarzan novels and comics, I wanted to roam around in the jungle and commune with animals. As a teenager reading Kerouac, I wanted to hitch around the country, forever. At the time this all seemed positive, unusual, necessary, right and good because ordinary contact with other people was unrewarding and frightening. Now I see this syndrome as very common and terribly sick, as a posture of avoidance--avoidance of contact, of responsibility, of growth, of taking risks with myself and others. Rather than heroic, the pose now seems mostly childish. I've come to see my adolescent reaction as an extreme but common response to the alienation we all experience under capitalism. We draw into ourselves, blame ourselves for what isn't right, suffer alone while hiding our "weaknesses and fear." One major function of bourgeois art is to turn this inner suffering into fabulous fantasies, which relieve the awful pressure built up inside individuals, but withhold information and the means of letting individuals perceive where that pressure comes from. Hollywood films, for example, validate extreme individualism by incorporating it into the star system, by giving us actors and actresses we all want to be like. We want to live, act, be like them, so we imitate their roles.

Even though I am aware of the deception involved in identifying with romantic/existential heroes, whenever I experience a certain type of art (such as literature by Camus and Sartre; films by Coppola, Sarafian, Peckinpah, Antonioni; performances by Nicholson, Oates, Newman, Pacino, and Hoffman), I respond and see how strongly influenced I still am by the bourgeois ideology of romantic male individualism I have been subjected to all my life. Like Sheila Rowbotham, I admired the "ultimate man," the 1950's anti-hero:

> He rarely spoke about philosophic matters but simply grunted his profound and intense version of the world and so communicated honestly because he didn't mess about with words. He defined his existence through a twitch of his nose or the flicker of his eye. He was constantly leaving and arriving, he rode a bike, hitched, rode on top of trains, or stowed away. He ate magic mushrooms on mountains in Mexico, or crossed the Sahara four times at least....My fantasy of the ultimate man was in fact extremely religious. I wanted a new kind of saint. (*Woman's Consciousness, Man's World*, p. 15)

We can find such a character in Monte Hellman's THE COCKFIGHTER (BORN TO KILL is the newer title). Warren Oates plays the laconic outsider, Frank Mansfield. Except for one line at the very end, Frank speaks on camera only in a few brief flashbacks, because he has given up speech until he wins the Cockfighter of the Year medal. (In case you think this is a porn film, it's not. The film depicts the practice of inciting trained roosters to fight to the kill; the major "sport" is the betting. It's a sort of penny-ante bullfighting with no band or the poor getting the benefit of the carcass afterwards.) Several obscure flashbacks show how Frank lost his chance for the medal the year before by pushing his arch-rival, Burke, into a cockfight in a motel room before the big tournament. Frank's bird loses and the film shows him walking into the darkness saying he won't utter a word until he wins the medal.

As the film opens, Frank, his bird, trailer, car and "woman" arrive at a place where cockfights take place. He immediately loses his car, trailer, and "woman" to Burke. As Frank walks away with suitcase and empty bird cage in his hand, he thinks to himself (in voice-over narration, sort of an interior monologue) that because this woman is young, pretty and a good lay, she can take care of herself.

This film is a glaring example of sexism in American narrative art. In THE COCKFIGHTER women are portrayed as mindless boobs, maternal dummies, predatory beasts, or civilizing castrators who don't understand why men need to compete. At one point we meet Frank's fiancee, Mary Elizabeth (Patricia Pearcy), who wants to marry Frank, settle down, and have children. In a beautifully photographed but banal scene, she tells Frank she has waited too long and can't wait any longer. In mute response, he puts on his shirt and leaves. Later, however, he writes to her, invites her to the big tournament, and asks her to give him a "fighting chance."

Mary Elizabeth does come to the tournament just in time to see Frank's dying bird win the medal for him. She is disgusted more by his response to the fighting than by the fight itself. In the final scene, Frank tears off the dead bird's head and gives it to her. She says it's a "substitute for your heart," puts it in her purse and leaves. Now all sorts of Freudian things come to mind. In both the dialogue and in the way the film is shot, Hellman shows the cocks to be extensions of or substitutes for the penis. During the fights the men often stand behind their birds, facing each other, legs spread apart, hands on hips. There are lots of waist high shots of the men. Just before the fights, the men stroke the birds' necks and backs. Having a good bird is clearly a tool to power, money, women, possessions, and fame. The rivalry between Frank and Burke is a classic macho contest--winner take all.

But for all this Freudian imagery, the film is sexless. There are no sexual relationships, no sexual interactions. Only once, in the flashback, is there a sex scene and it is juxtaposed with a cockfight as if to equate the two, as if to say that the men's cockfighting is a substitute for sexual activity.

Hellman suggests this desexualizated substitution by making the cock a very ambiguous symbol. As fighting cock, the rooster is a phallic symbol. But as a bird, it is identified with women. The woman Frank gives up in the beginning of the film is thin and angular and has bird-like gestures. Once she attacks him in the ring during a "hack" (fight between birds) and he carries her off over his shoulder. In the flashback, a slow motion lovemaking scene corresponds to the cockfight in the same flashback. The woman bites her mate and the motions are much the same as in the fight. Thus when Frank gives the limp, spent rooster head and neck to Mary Elizabeth, it is not as a "substitute for his heart" as she thinks, but as a sort of consolation prize. She can have what is left over from the male-world substitute for heterosexual relationships. She wisely leaves.

The only warmth in the movie is shared by Frank and his partner Omar Baradinsky. The relationship is typical of the male bonding in American narrative art which Leslie Fiedler has discussed in *Love and Death in the American Novel*. According to Fiedler, American novelists' inability to show mature male-female relationships leads them to show male-male relationships. Fiedler loves to shock his readers and audiences by pointing out the obvious homosexual undercurrents and possibilities in the relationship between men such as Huck Finn and Jim. The relationship between Frank and Omar follows Fiedler's model in other ways. An anglo male hero (Frank) has an ethnic sidekick (Baradinsky, who describes himself as a fourth generation Polish Jew from Indiana), both of whom find happiness in the wilderness (Georgia) away from the destructive, civilizing influence of women.

Male bonding of all kinds has become an extremely popular narrative device in American films: BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID, CALIFORNIA SPLIT, ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN. But it has always been a way to structure westerns and gangster films--the most male genres. It is probably the lack of satisfying male relations in middle class white male culture which make artistic (and unrealistic) portrayals of "successful" male bonding so popular. Middle class men wish for the companionship that is portrayed. But equally significant is the fact that sexism--seen in the hatred, subordination, marginality, or total absence of women--is an important component in all these films. Male bonding constitutes the society of men; its unity rests on oppressing women, gays, and racial minorities. I think that male-bonding films have become so popular because male dominance has been threatened internally by the women's black, and gay liberation movements and externally by the US's loss in Vietnam. These films respond to a need for a greater sense of cohesiveness, but they also represent an effort to convince men that their domination of women--and, by extension, everyone else--is both right and essential to their self-definition.

Like his other films, Hellman's THE COCKFIGHTER utilizes the main elements of bourgeois cinema: an extreme individualism verging on misanthropy; misogyny, expressed directly in glaring sexism and indirectly in male bonding; and the typical substitutes for mature sexual interaction--sports and violence. GODFATHER II contained all these elements, too, but since Coppola so scrupulously showed the way they related to the development of capitalism, i.e. but his psycho-narrative in a clear historical and social context, I had no problem liking the film. Hellman's film cannot be so praised, for THE COCKFIGHTER is basically a fantasy having little or no contact with a real life, time or place. The misanthropy and misogyny are not tied to any situation that would give them meaning or would show us where they came from but are presented as innate attributes of human nature.

THE COCKFIGHTER interests me because of its crazy unconventionality, its playing with filmic conventions, and its humorous treatment of the story. It evoked a strong emotional response in me. I reject it finally because I can see where it is leading me. And although we can easily see and criticize misanthropy and misogyny as powerful components of bourgeois ideology which are reinforced in most Hollywood films, it is insufficient simply to dismiss such films without also seeing and analyzing what attracts us to them. For in that way we come to understand the mechanics of sexism and bourgeois ideology much better. A film like THE COCKFIGHTER is sexist in its content and cinematography and romantic in its treatment of the hero. The glamor of the individualism makes the sexism seem natural and OK. Such a filmic structure sets up a reactionary response. But once you understand what the film is doing politically, you can't like it in the innocent way Hellman intends. □

Race with the Devil

A BRIEF VACATION ON THE OPEN ROAD

--Robbyn Grant and Barry K. Grant

RACE WITH THE DEVIL is a clumsily directed melodrama based on an illogical script, featuring weak characterization and uninspired editing. Yet it is surprisingly good in creatively employing cultural symbols--so good that the movie becomes a cohesive and revealing document of contemporary America.

The story concerns two couples who begin a long-awaited vacation in a new $36,000 mobile camper. On the first night, camped in an apparently secluded area, they witness a mysterious supernatural rite which culminates in a sacrificial murder. The devil worshippers, realizing that they have been seen, swiftly and viciously pursue the vacationers, who safely make it to the nearest town. Because they are not very satisified with the local sheriff's investigation, the vacationers decide to report the matter to the police in Amarillo, the nearest city. The remainder of the film depicts their attempt to reach the interstate highway which leads to Amarillo, and the series of bizarre and irrational attacks upon them and the motor home by the pursuing witches, who seem to be everywhere. As the film ends, and it appears as if they are going to make it to Amarillo, they are abruptly surrounded by the devil worshippers. Through a series of concluding close-ups it becomes clear that everyone else in the film is, indeed, a member of this strange cult.

The film's major metaphor is that of the mobile camper, which is portrayed as having all the luxuries and conveniences of the modern American home, including color TV, microwave oven and a fully-equipped bar. The motor home is the physical embodiment of the fundamental yet paradoxical desire of the protagonists. The American conception of vacation implies a basic dissatisfaction with the American way of life. The very notion of "vacation," as it has developed into a modern national institution, has become more an escape *from* one's daily condition, the routine of work, rather than a coming *to* a new experience with which one might enrich one's daily life. Today, *vacation* is virtually synonymous with *travel*--primarily because modern living for many reasons invariably makes one want to flee, if only temporarily. It is the rare American who spends his or her vacation at home; and if he or she does so, it is more often than not because he or she can't afford to travel. The travel vacation is a temporary escape-valve--perhaps the modern equivalent of Turner's idea of the frontier as a safety-valve--and if tourism has become a major national industry, it is because our society always manages to absorb into itself that which initially was a reaction against it. But the nature of American tourism, despite the fact that it has become institutionalized, remains an expression (largely unarticulated) of dissatisfaction with daily life: one travels to "relax," that is, to renew one's energies for another year of work. In RACE WITH THE DEVIL the Warren Oates character emphasizes that he has waited five years for this vacation from the job pressures shown at the film's start.

Travelling from city to country, the film's protagonists are in one sense taking flight from the city. Like the American phenomenon of "urban flight," this "vacation" can be seen to be at least partly motivated by fear--of the city and existence in it. But even as they desire to flee their situation, they take with them, in the form of the motor home and its contents, the cultural baggage which symbolizes that very existence they wish to escape: luxuries of the home and the home itself can only be obtained and maintained through work. To leave their luxuries behind would be to admit the failure of their middle-class values.

If their trip is understood in this context, then the incredibly evil and violent cultists can be interpreted as a projection, an incarnation, of their fears and doubts. In this sense the witches in the film are similar to "the horrors" in Donald Barthelme's story "The Firemen's Ball," who are always lurking just outside, an embodiment of the characters' own repression. No longer offering security and stability in the (supernatural) confusion of modern times, the home is transformed into a nomadic fortress, always traveling to be safe, always fighting off the terrible demons which threaten to invade it. It is a social response like that which produced the fallout shelter boom of the late '50s, and its antecedents date back at least as far as Tom Hutter's floating castle, which prevented an invasion by the Indians, in Cooper's *The Deerslayer*. The Indians were for Cooper in one sense a projection of the id, those desires and feelings repressed by civilization; in RACE WITH THE DEVIL the witches are the very horrible truth that financial well-being, middle-class comfort, is neither happiness nor security.

Traditionally, the auto has symbolized a sense of travelling free, an escape from the restrictions of society. On the move, you're free. This is the case in films from YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE to BONNIE AND CLYDE, from THE WILD ONE to EASY RIDER; in literature from the raft in *Huckleberry Finn* to the auto in *On the Road* (although there have been moments of doubt or ambivalence, as in *The Great Gatsby*). The automobile was at once the objective correlative for and the means of a rejection of society and its values.

But the meaning of the auto has been reversed in RACE WITH THE DEVIL. The vacation begins with a glorious shot (which, of course, quickly becomes ironic) of the open road winding away into the distance like a golden ribbon. The shot speaks to the notion of the American Dream as it is conceived in terms of space. One thinks immediately of Walt Whitman's poem "Song of the Open Road," the very title having become a metaphor for the American Dream. But the preceding shot reveals in the foreground the hard yellow line which divides the highway; it is a broken line, indicating the broken promise of the Dream and the discord which has resulted from the harsh awakening to American limitations. One may think of the yellow brick road, and indeed that road leads back to Kansas, now the very "vortex" (as Allen Ginsberg describes it in "Wichita Vortex Sutra") of American violence and paranoia.

Within this rich metaphorical framework, RACE WITH THE DEVIL emerges as an anguished statement of contemporary disaffection with American society. Like many other B films--and this movie is surely one of the "new look" B films of the '70s--RACE WITH THE DEVIL handles relevant cultural materials in a visually coded manner that is not very artistically "self-conscious." Hence, it serves as a relatively reliable barometer of contemporary attitudes. For this reason, RACE WITH THE DEVIL is one of the most unassuming and at the same time most interesting of recent American films. □

JAWS

the jaws in the mirror

--Dan Rubey

JAWS became the biggest and fastest grossing film in the history of the industry on September 5th, only 78 days after release. Three days later it had passed the previous record gross of THE GODFATHER by more than $38 million (*Variety*, Sept. 10, 1975, p. 3). This enormous popularity means JAWS is an expression of the society's consciousness, and should be approached critically in terms of that consciousness rather than as the private vision of a director. Spielberg's film and Benchley's novel have cashed in on the emotions already attached to people-eating sharks by creating fictional and filmic structures which involve audiences with the shark as an image. But these structures are more than simply a series of individually created narrative events, they are also a series of explanations and interpretations of the shark image in terms of the shared concerns and fears of our society. In JAWS the shark reflects a disguised hatred of women and the preoccupation of our society with sadistic sexuality, a view of business as predatory and irresponsible in human terms, and a fear of retribution for the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The film resolves these issues and fears by externalizing them from the protagonists and solving them in a macho-fantasy, fear-and-bravery ending which denies any possibility of concerted social action, excludes women as weak and ineffectual, and erases the past and its guilts.

The question of whether or not it is reasonable to discuss Hollywood "escapist" films like JAWS in a context of social and historical events and concerns like these has already been raised in *Jump Cut*, in Fred Kaplan's article on disaster movies in No. 6 ("Riches From Ruins") and the replies to it by David Rosen ("Drugged Popcorn") and Ernest Larsen ("Lemmings and Escapism") in No. 8, and Kaplan's reply in this issue. My own position is closer to that of Rosen and Larsen, although I agree with many of Kaplan's specific points. I assume that the popularity of a film like JAWS means that the film articulates the current concerns, fears, and desires of the people who see it and recommend it to their friends, and that these people like the film in part because they recognize as true, or familiar, or intelligible the view of reality and the narrative interpretations and causal relationships the film presents. The more widely popular a film, the more confidently we can say that the view of reality and the social and psychological concerns articulated in the film are those of society as a whole, or at least that those concerns are held in common by a large proportion of the society's members, no matter how much they may differ in other ways. A mass-market film like JAWS, made to sell as many tickets as possible, is an attempt to articulate in fictional and filmic terms the shared concerns of the society, and box-office grosses are the only proof of success. Spielberg has said he wanted to make a *movie*, not a film (Carl Gottlieb, *Jaws Log*, New York: Dell, 1975, p. 42), and the distinction is between a work aimed at a mass audience and one aimed at a smaller, elite audience.

Of course, all films must be aimed at a large enough audience to be at least minimally commercially successful, and no film can afford to be as idiosyncratic as a novel because of the economics involved. But there is a continuum here. At one end is the work of directors whose vision of reality is relatively individualistic and who are trying to question conventional ways of seeing or create new perceptual syntheses. At the other end is the work of directors like Spielberg who are trying to articulate common denominators of their society's shared consciousness. This second kind of work is commonly called *escapist*, but the term is a misleading one. Such works escape from nothing but the attempt to create new ways of seeing (or rather, the attempt to articulate new ways of seeing already shared by a small group within the society). They certainly do not escape from reality: they present reality as a majority of people in the society see it. Particular images or settings or characters may be fantastic and unreal, in terms of the way *realism* is understood in fiction and film criticism. But the ways they are structured and interpreted within the work are necessarily the ways in which the audience sees reality and makes sense of its experience, no matter

how inaccurate smaller groups within the society feel this view of reality is.

In JAWS, the easiest way to approach the film's view of reality and the shared social concerns reflected in it is through examination of the explanatory contexts the film builds around each of the shark attacks. Actual shark attacks are random events, not motivated by specific personal details in the victims. But the demands of film, and narrative in general, insist that the work provide at least a context of explanation, an ~~imaginary~~ illusion of cause and effect if not a rationally worked out statement. Art organizes experience, and this organization carries with it moral and explanatory overtones, unless the writer or director deliberately frustrates this tendency. This artistic organization is centrally important to the popularity of a work like JAWS; it explains why JAWS was so much more popular than Peter Gimbel's documentary, BLUE WATER, WHITE DEATH, which is also about a hunt for great white sharks.

Such explanatory contexts can be simplistic or complex, but it is unrealistic to expect them to be thematically unified or even consistent in a mass-market product like JAWS. Auteur theory and organic criticism are inappropriate tools for analyzing films like JAWS because of the large number of people who contribute significantly to the final product. At least three writers in addition to Benchley and Spielberg worked on the JAWS screenplay, and Spielberg allowed his actors to improvise dialogue and even whole scenes in rehearsal (Gottlieb, p. 60). Such a film may have certain kinds of perceptual unity, but this unity derives from shared patterns of thinking in the society itself, and these patterns may well be inconsistent and contradictory. A good director of mass-market films is probably distinguished by his or her eye for what is appropriate or inappropriate to the material in terms of the consciousness of the intended audience, rather than by any ability to create aesthetically and thematically coherent and unified films.

The first explanatory context in JAWS is necessarily the most general, since it begins the film and cannot draw on plot or characterization. The shark's first victim is Crissie Watkins, a young, long-haired woman swimming naked at night, a "skinny-dipping adolescent" in *Time*'s contemptuous and hostile phrase. She is a member of a group of college students at a beach party. As the film opens, she leads a young man away from the fire and goes for a naked swim while he passes out on the beach. The shark attack is filmed as a sexual attack, a substitute for the uncomsummated encounter with the young man. (The woman has already made love in Benchley's novel.) The shark's-eye camera view watches from below as the woman swims acrobatically above, and then rises up under her toward her crotch as she scissor-kicks vertically in the water. The camera quickly switches to the surface of the water, and the close-up of the woman's agonized face as the unseen shark tears her body under the water is a frightening imitation of orgasm, the cliche of the equivalence of pleasure and pain used almost from the first portrayal of female orgasm in film.

This juxtaposition of images, the erotic swimming sequence and the shark attack, appeals to a sadism and hatred of women which must be assumed to be a part of the consciousness of the film's audience, although the sadism is disguised (as it is not in recent films like THE NIGHT PORTER, THE STORY OF O, or THE STORY OF JOANNA) so that it can be enjoyed by people who would not admit to having sadistic impulses or tastes. If this seems far-fetched as an expression of the common, shared mentality of the society, see science-fiction writer A.E. Van Vogt's novel, *The Silkie*, in which being eaten alive by a shark-like creature is portrayed as the ultimate orgasm. Science fiction is clearly a mass-market genre, and one in which the fantasy life of our culture receives its clearest exposition.

JAWS' *unity derives from shared patterns of thinking in the society itself.*

Suggesting that this juxtaposition of images provides an explanatory context for the death of Crissie Watkins does not mean simply that she is killed *because* she goes swimming naked, although that might be a possible interpretation for some viewers. It means that for the audience of JAWS, the combination of images and references in terms of which the shark attack makes intuitive sense. Sexuality and violence are so inextricably linked in this society that the presence of one explains the presence of the other.

The shark's second victim is a child, and the context here is one of civic responsibility and male protectiveness. This episode answers some of the issues raised in the first by affirming that we are protectors of women and children, not sadistic voyeurs. Police chief Martin Brody (Roy Schneider) is kept from closing the beaches by the mayor and town council because Amity ("Amity means friendship") needs the business. Here the explanatory context is clear. The greed and willful blindness of the business community causes the death of a young boy, Alex Kintner, and of an unidentified man on the July Fourth weekend.

Initially at least, this seems like an attack on capitalist economics as a rapacious system that devours its victims and cares only for profit. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Spielberg's movie makes the merchants and civic government of Amity itself responsible, while in Benchley's novel the pressure to keep the beaches open comes from shadowy pseudo-Mafia figures in the background. But it's difficult to know whether or not this focus on the business community reflects any increase in the normal American distrust of business growing out of the current recession, and the film is not specific enough to give an answer. However, several things suggest this distrust has become stronger and more articulate in the past two years. The public relations campaign on television by the major oil companies reflects the fact that many Americans believe the oil shortage was engineered by those companies, and the series extolling free enterprise running in *Reader's Digest* indicates that the business community in general feels under serious attack. The term "administered prices" and the realization that this is no longer a supply and demand economy have made their way into the popular media, and may become the tip of an attack on unfair profit-taking. The recent Hart Associates Poll reported that 58% of the people interviewed agreed that "America's major corporations tend to dominate and determine the actions of our public officials in Washington," and that 49% agreed that big business is now enough of a villain in society's consciousness to stand on its own as a heavy, without help from the Mafia.

But if this section of the film is an attack on capitalism, it is badly aimed and ineffectual. It focuses on individuals rather than the system itself, blaming them for being weak rather than examining the pressures placed on them by the system of making alternate forms of behavior possible. The only businessperson characterized at all in the film is a woman who owns a motel. She is pictured as strident and humorless, concerned only with the money she stands to lose if the beaches are closed. The point of having a woman represent the business community does not manifest a liberated attitude toward women; it is simply an insult, and indication that they are all weak and unable to deal with the shark.

Sexuality and violence are so linked in this culture that the presence of one explains the other.

This section of the film climaxes in the July Fourth weekend killing, and it is organized by images of powerlessness and impotence on the part of the community. This powerlessness undercuts any real sense that the business community is responsible for the deaths because of its nature. The burlesque bounty hunt inspired by Mrs. Kintner's $3000 reward is a parody of the possibilities of community action. When it is over, the dead boy's mother slaps Brody's face on the dock, saying that he knew about the shark, "but still my boy is dead--and there's nothing you can do about it." Brody organizes spotter patrols in boats, but the shark slips through them unseen, and the men are left pointing their phallic rifles at two little boys with a fake shark fin on a float. The shark penetrates the supposedly safe estuary and attacks a man in a small boat, a surrogate victim for Brody's son. The man's severed leg sinks to the bottom of the pond as an image of castration which sums up all of the powerlessness of the men in this sequence. The sighting of the shark forces Mayor Vaughn to admit he has been wrong, and he breaks down. Near hysteria, Vaughn can barely sign the authorization Brody shoves under his nose for hiring the shark hunter, Quint (Robert Shaw), a real man and the solution to the problem.

This treatment of the business community is not an attack on the system because there is no outside perspective on it, no sense that people would or could act differently in a different system. Brody, who knows the shark is out there, takes the mayor's word as binding. The fact that he does not even consider resigning when threatened with losing his job if he closes the beaches means (a bit contradictorily, I admit) that such an option does not exist within the fictional universe of the film, and later in the film, that he is personally weak for doing something he knows is wrong. When Alex Kintner's mother accuses him of responsibility for her son's death, and the mayor tells him she is wrong, Brody replies "No, she's right." The individual should be able to overcome the system by himself in the ideal world of Amity. Earlier Brody explained that he liked being police chief in Amity because, unlike New York City, "one man can make a difference." Within this vision of reality, it is now up to Brody to overcome his moral weakness by physically proving he is man and killing the shark.

These formulations defuse any possible criticism of the economic system itself, something made clear by the reviews which complained that the decision to keep the beaches open didn't make good business sense anyway, because it's bad publicity to have people eaten. So the issue becomes one of making the most intelligent business decision (what's good for business is good for you), rather than an examination of the ways economic pressures cloud people's ability to see that there is really a shark out there. By externalizing blame from the system and transferring it to weak individuals who can be redeemed through initiation under fire, the film creates a fantasy which reflects the audience's fears about the economic system they live inside of, but at the same time denies that their problems are inherent in the system itself.

The shark hunt depends on the expertise of Quint, the Captain Ahab of this *Moby Dick*. Quint is the only important character in the film outside the comfortable upper-class world of the Amity residents, and despite Shaw's interesting characterization, he functions as a caricature of the working class. Benchley's novel puts class differences and tensions at the heart of things, in Brody's marriage. Brody is Amity working class, his wife is mainland summer-people upper class, and the difference puts a strain on their marriage. Ellen Brody has an affair with Matt Hooper, the Woods Hole oceanographer brought in to help with the shark. Hooper is the younger brother of one of Ellen's former lovers and a member of her own class. The affair is her attempt to get back in touch with her class origins. Spielberg's film eliminates the class difference between Ellen and Martin Brody and the affair that grows out of it. Class tensions are restricted to the relationship of Hooper (Richard Dreyfuss) and Quint, the "wealthy college-boy" and the "working-class hero" as they contemptuously refer to each other. Brody is allied with Hooper instead of being his enemy, but essentially remains outside of the conflict.

The rivalry between Hooper and Quint allows the film to make fun of Quint's macho qualities and attach them to a working-class character outside Brody's world. In a typical scene, Quint crushes a beer can in one hand, and Hooper mimics him by crushing a styrofoam coffee cup. But at the same time, the film uses Quint to set up and make believable the macho-fantasy ending it has been building toward, the male fantasy of tough men doing a tough job, risking their lives to protect the women and children at home, coming to mutual respect through rough camaraderie, danger, drinking, and story-telling. Quint's boat provides a setting for the initiation of Brody--whose only scar is an appendix scar, who is afraid of the water, and who keeps asking for a "bigger boat."

Quint is also a woman-hater, and his dislike for women is treated as a natural counterpart of the manliness which makes him an effective shark killer. This cinematic sleight-of-hand allows the hatred of women which runs throughout the film to be located in a character who represents the working class, thereby displacing the responsibility for it. Quint's dislike of women can be easily documented. When the contract to hunt the shark is signed, Quint's toast is "Here's to swimmin' with bow-legged wimmen," a disturbing image in the context of the way Crissie Watkins' death was filmed. His rough language at the dock when the three men set out ("...blow your ass out the window") and double-entendre remarks to Brody ("see you got your rubbers with you") are calculated to disturb Ellen Brody, and they succeed. She says to Brody that Quint scares her, and leaves the dock in tears. The diminution of her role in general is consistent with this scene; she exists in the film only to be scared.

The song Quint sings several times, "Farewell and adieu, you fair Spanish ladies," portrays women as whores to be left behind as men sail off to the serious business of war and death. The men compare scars at night on the boat in a warmly-treated scene of male camaraderie, and Quint shows one he got arm wrestling in a bar celebrating his "third wife's demise." Hooper shows his own woman-related mark, an invisible scar on his chest placed there by "Mary Ellen Moffitt: she broke my heart." The scene is amusing, and Hooper's line is very funny in context. But the humor and distancing technique make Quint carry the weight of the film's aggression against women in the same way that he carries the macho fantasy, externalizing them from Brody and Hooper (and thus from the audience), and finally denying them totally when he is killed by the shark.

The pervasiveness of these attitudes of deni-

gration, hatred, and aggression toward women and the predominance of male-oriented fantasies in JAWS raise an important question about this analysis and an audience-based approach to film in general. How can JAWS appeal to such a large audience, which must necessarily include women, if these attitudes and fantasies are present in the film? This is a difficult question for a man to answer with much assurance, but I think women can enjoy and participate in these fantasies because they identify with the protagonists in basically the same way men do, ignoring their own sex and their community of interest with other women for the purpose of participating in the work. This is possible because identification with characters in a fantasy is not restricted by one's personal characteristics or life. The men in the audience are no more likely to kill a twenty-five foot shark than the women. What is being identified with (or participated in) is the role of power and competency, in itself a sexless role, but one usually assigned to men in this society. The hatred and aggression toward women in the film is not perceived by women in the audience as directed against them personally, any more than men feel the portrayal of Mayor Vaughn is directed against them personally, even though all women are treated in this way, while distinctions are made among men. It may even be that women viewing the film participate in the fantasy by using it as an expression of their own feelings of hatred and aggression toward other women, especially younger and more attractive women like Crissie Watkins. The hatred of women by women encouraged in a male-dominated society has been frequently documented by the women's movement, and film critic Molly Haskell has said, "it is not just men who thrill to the violent, male-chauvinist world of THE GODFATHER, but women who, wishing women's lib would go away like a bad dream, secretly enjoy the Sicilian gangster denigration of women, of 'putting them in their place'." (*From Reverence to Rape*, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1974).

The final interpretive context is the most specific and historical, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and the guilt and fear attached to that act. Hooper asks Quint about the scar of an erased tattoo on his arm during the nighttime scar exhibition on the boat. The tattoo was the name of Quint's ship in World War II, the U.S.S. Indianapolis, and the horror story of the Indianapolis is a true one (see Richard Newcomb's *Abandon Ship!*, New York: Henry Holt, 1958, and Thomas Helm's *Ordeal by Sea*, New York: Dodd Mead & Co., 1963). As Quint tells it, the Indianapolis had just carried the Hiroshima atomic bomb from San Francisco to Tinian where it was to be loaded on the bomber Enola Gay, and was torpedoed by a Japanese sub on its way to Leyte. The ship sank, and its crew was dumped into the water. No distress signal was sent because of the secrecy surrounding everything connected with the bomb, and the men were left in the water for five days, until they were accidentally sighted by a flyer. Sharks began to hit the men almost immediately, killing six an hour. Of the 1100 men who went into the water, only 316 came out. "Anyway," Quint says, "we delivered the bomb." The three men hear a strange, eerie sound that Hooper identifies as the song of a whale. They start singing to raise their spirits, and the shark begins attacking the boat.

So the last interpretative, explanatory context offered for the great white shark in JAWS is the disaster of the U.S.S. Indianapolis. On the simplest level of plot, the connection explains Quint's hatred of sharks and his career as a shark hunter. The connection has a historical veracity to it, because the interest of Americans in sharks, documented by countless magazine articles, books, and films, dates from WWII and the encounters with sharks of downed airmen and sailors in tropical waters.

But there is more here. It may seem coincidental that the Indianapolis had carried the Hiroshima bomb, but myths are created out of such coincidences. It is difficult to talk about what such a juxtaposition *means* without seeming reductive and unresponsive to the layers of complexity and ambiguity involved, because such a discussion is necessarily fragmenting and linear. Analysis lacks the power of art to function simultaneously on several levels. But it would be naive to claim that no meaning is inherent in the juxtaposition in the film, that Spielberg or Benchley or Gottlieb (or whoever added it to the screenplay) simply picked the Indianapolis sinking to motivate Quint because it was the worst shark disaster he knew, and that reference to the bombing was included only because it was part of the story. Even if a meaning for the connection was not consciously worked out in the writer's mind, it is the nature of film as a narrative medium to suggest that causal relationships exist between narratively related acts, and such relationships create the film's meaning.

On the most simplistically causal level then, the men of the Indianapolis were killed by the sharks in retribution for the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and the deaths of 70,000 Japanese civilians. But if this is punishment, who is the punisher? The only possible answer is something like Nature, natural forces anthropomorphized, punishing the savagery of man with the savagery of the sharks. JAWS does treat the great white shark as something larger and more mysterious than a hungry fish. It develops from a mindless eating-machine into a malevolent force--intelligent, vengeful, unnaturally powerful, perhaps thousands of years old. Benchley's shark dies because the barrels Quint harpoons into it slow it down so much that it finally suffocates, just as it is about to kill Brody. But the barrels are not enough in the film. The shark is still able to submerge and chase the boat. It dies only when Brody is able to get a bullet into a compressed air tank lodged in its mouth, a revision which changes Brody from a helpless victim spared by luck into a hero.

Both men and women identify with the role of power and competency.

On another level of interpretation, the shark represents our own voracity and savagery in war. Chennault's Flying Tigers painted teeth on the front of their planes, and some c. the helicopters in HEARTS AND MINDS displayed similar markings. The shark is an image of the viciousness of our own society in war, a savagery we want to identify with when it seems justified in moral terms as protection of ourselves or others, but which we also want to deny and externalize when there is no such justification because of unconscious fears of retribution in kind. In this context, the shark represents fears of retribution for the bombing of Hiroshima (and perhaps for our role in Vietnam as well) growing out of feelings of guilt and doubts about the justifiability of our actions. Here it is not a question of being punished for our actions by some super-human agency, but one of having somehow made ourselves vulnerable to the savagery of nature by our own participation in that savagery.

But even if any of this is actually suggested in the film, can it possibly be said that such guilt exists in the shared consciousness of the American society as a whole? This question can be approached in two ways. First, by looking for overt references to the issue in books, periodicals, films, etc., and second, by looking for disguised reflections of it in fiction and films.

In the first category, the *New York Times* carried a number of articles on the bombing during 1975, the thirtieth anniversary of the atomic age. Charles L. Mee's *Meeting at Potsdam* (New York: M. Evans & Co.) was reviewed on the front page of the March 9th *Book Review* section, and

the argument of Mee's book is that the atomic bombing of Japan was realized at the time to be unnecessary in terms of the war with Japan. The real reason for the bombings, according to Mee, was the intimidation of Russia, our enemy in the new cold war implicitly declared at the Potsdam conference a month earlier. On July 27th, the Sunday *Times Magazine* (pp. 7-29) published an article by Barton J. Bernstein admitting that the Nagasaki bombing was unnecessary, and that while the bombing of Hiroshima was inevitable given the momentum of the war effort and the newness of Truman's presidency, the intimidation of Russia was at least "a secondary objective... a much appreciated bonus." The bomb was dropped despite the opposition of scientists who predicted its use would lead to an arms race with Russia. Aside from strengthening America in the postwar period and justifying the $2-billion spent on developing it, the clearest reason for using the bomb in Bernstein's account is vengeance on the Japanese, "revenge for Pearl Harbor and their murder of our prisoners of war," as Truman later said. Finally, in an editorial on August 10th in the *Times Week in Review* (p. 15), William Shannon wrote on "the feelings of national guilt" about the bombing in these terms:

> Our feelings of guilt are now tinctured with dread. We have come to realize that we cannot keep the terrifying secret for ourselves alone, that others possess it, and that mortal enemies work night and day to refine nuclear weapons for possible use. Our dread is that Hiroshima's fate may become our own.

I believe that in a less overt way the country realized all this long ago. The atomic mutation monsters and the apocalyptic nuclear wars of fifties science fiction were a reflection of this combination of guilt and dread. The monster films articulated our hopes that the government and military establishment would be able to deal with the atomic monster they had created. The apocalyptic ones reflected our fears they would fail. Of course, the whole issue was reflected in McCarthyism and cold war insanities like the Rosenberg trial. I was in high school during the fifties, and remember taking a foreign-exchange student qualifying exam which asked how I would respond if someone abroad said the dropping of the bombs on Japan was immoral. The question reflected a fear that the bombing had made us vulnerable to the outside, was an issue that could be used against us.

What does JAWS finally do with all of this? As in the previous explanatory contexts, it is externalized from the protagonists Brody and Hooper. When Quint is killed by the shark, he takes with him the history he represents. History, the bomb, and the cold war are all erased, just as Quint himself erased the U.S.S. Indianapolis tattoo from his arm. Quint and the shark die together, leaving Brody and Hooper to kick for shore.

Hooper's survival is a key to the differences between Benchley's book and Spielberg's film, and to the explanatory technique of the film. He survives because his affair with Ellen Brody has been excised, and there is no need to kill him off. This alteration externalizes the conflicts reflected in the film from the protagonists, denying them any share of responsibility for the issues raised in the interpretative contexts, and by implication denying it to the audience. Brody's family life in the film is good, warm, and loving, consistently shot in soft, warm colors. His wife is beautiful and devoted, his children loving and obedient. The organizing pattern of these scenes is a shifting back and forth between events involving the shark and scenes of Brody in the warm bosom of his family. Outside it's cold and dangerous and

gray; inside it's warm and secure and colorful. This alternation runs throughout the film, from Crissie Watkins' movement from the warm circle of the beach fire into the cold, dark sea, to the interruption of the three men's warm camaraderie on Quint's boat by the shark's attack.

The shark is an ideal image for the articulation of this inside/outside view of reality because of its nature. Sharks are creatures of the sea, and the land/sea division is a good reflection of the inside/outside division, and one which paradoxically offers a certain amount of reassurance and security, becuase while sharks are terrifying in their own element, they cannot threaten anyone who chooses to stay away from the water. The film reproduces the fundamental land/sea interface in several ways: in the various boats--Ben Gardner's, Hooper's, the boat that Brody gives his son, the small boat of the man killed in the estuary, and Quint's *Orca*; in the dock the shark pulls apart; and with even more fragility, in the air and water interface itself. For me, the most terrifying moments in the film are the moments when the shark breaks through these barriers, penetrating into our space and threatening our illusion of security. Spielberg's film captures these moments of primal terror because his sense of realism demanded that the film be shot with all the principals (including the shark) in the frame (Gottlieb, p. 42). The usual technique of cutaway shots and closeups would have saved Universal the price of the three 25-foot mechanical sharks used in the film, but it could only have suggested, rather than actually shown, the shark breaking into the human space of the characters.

The killing of Crissie Watkins is filmed from two perspectives, above the water, the human-land perspective, and below the water, the shark-sea perspective, and the interface between the two perspectives is not broken. The water is transparent from below but opaque from above, so that when the shark hits her, we see only her head and shoulders thrashing back and forth above the surface of the water. The scene is horrifying enough, but no one in the audience screamed when I saw the film. Those screams were reserved for moments when the shark's head and jaws actually rose out of the water, invading our space, breaking through the barriers we have erected to keep all the things it represents outside. The first such moment comes when the shark kills Alex Kintner. We see the boy on the plastic raft from below the surface as the shark approaches, and then the perspective switches quickly to the surface and the other people in the water who, like us, have seen something huge, but only briefly and indistinctly. The second comes when the shark kills the man in the estuary on the July Fourth weekend. Here the perspective is entirely above water. People see the shark's fin and tail as it swims into the Pond, its head as it attacks the man in the small boat, and its body as it glides past Michael Brody. The shark is now in our environment, and there are no more shark's-eye shots. The next moment comes when the shark rises up behind Brody as he is chumming off Quint's boat (throwing dead fish and guts into the water to attract the shark). Finally the shark batters its way into the boat itself and kills Quint, an ever-increasing incursion into the land/sea, inside/outside barrier.

JAWS externalizes and transfers blame from the system onto weak individuals who can be redeemed by initiation under fire.

The primary interface, in psychological terms, is that of our own bodies. We are inside; everything else, by analogy everything that is not like us or cannot be identified with us, is outside. The shark is a perfect image for the violation of this barrier, because it tears its victims apart. It is an instrument of dismemberment, of violation of the integrity of the body. In terms of Freudian psychoanalysis, the emotional affect attached to the shark image in personal, experiential terms derives from the oral aggression directed at the mother's breast we all felt as infants because of our mother's inevitable inability to satisfy all our desires immediately and completely, coupled with fears of retribution in kind for that aggression. If the child wants to devour its mother to satisfy its oral needs and at the same time prevent her from ever leaving even for a moment, it also fears through the eye-for-an-eye (talion) mentality of immature intelligence that it will be devoured instead, a fear the shark exemplifies. JAWS inappropriately projects this primitive, body-based way of thinking and perceiving onto women in general, and then society as a whole, turning history and social issues into private psychodrama.

So JAWS is not escapism; it is a skillfully crafted articulation of the concerns and fears of our society in images ideally suited to them and in part derived from them, organized in terms of the ways in which we see reality and understand our own experience. The film shows us our own reflection, and Chief Brody aside, I don't think it's going to cure anyone of their fear of the water. □

ROLLERBALL

Rollerball Superstar, or Jesus Christ on Skates

--Richard Astle

"Rollerball" is the name, both of a film by Norman Jewison, and of a kind of sports event within the film--an improbable combination of roller derby and motorcycle football that makes ice hockey seem as tame as cricket by comparison. Two records indicate its power and brutality: highest velocity ball fielded by a player--120 mph; most deaths in a single game--nine. Indeed, the gentle interludes between the games seem, like the romance between the scientist's daughter and the young male hero in so many monster movies, almost mere fill, inserted to give the audience a chance to catch its breath and to make the game seem all the more exciting when it returns. For Rollerball, like THEM and all those other products of the unholy congress of nature and (capitalist) technology, is a monster too and the real star of the film with which it shares a name.

ROLLERBALL takes place in a near future in which nations, bankrupt and defeated in the "corporate wars" no one quite remembers, have been replaced by the "majors," multinational monopolies dividing control of the six sectors of the economy: Transport, Food, Communications, Housing, Luxury, and Energy. A superficially reasonable (in the sense that laissez-faire capitalism is also "reasonable") premise here is that the abolition of nations, with their "tribal warfare," and the establishment of sound business practices in the running of the world could and would lead to an economy of abundance, in which some are privileged, but in which all are provided for. "Corporate Society," in the words of Energy executive Bartholemew, "was an inevitable destiny, a material dream world." Most everyone we see agrees. Moonpie, a rollerball player, says, "We're livin' good, you know we are," and Ella, former wife of superstar Jonathan E. (James Caan), favorably presents the ruling ideology: "They have control, economically and politically, but they also provide."

And provide they do. No scene between the games reveals less than conspicuous luxury. But the ideological line is drawn late in the film by Jonathan, answering Ella's statement above: "People made a choice back then between having all them nice things, and freedom." "But comfort *is* freedom," Ella answers, and he adds, "Them privileges just buy us off." As Bartholemew puts it, "All (Corporate Society) asks, all it has ever asked of anyone, is not to interfere with management decisions.

There is still more in Corporate Society that indicates the price that has been paid for its static affluence. There is a small matter of anti-orientalism, visible in Moonpie's attitude towards the diminuitive (by Texas standards) Japanese rollerball players, whom he thus underestimates and who, as a result, catch him off-guard and send him to the hospital in a coma that might as well be death--an anti-orientalism that we might see as a vestige of nationalism (maintaining regional chauvinism when nations have disappeared) as racism in our own culture might be seen as a vestige of tribalism. The relatively non-geographic black-white racism with which we are still familiar is conspicuously absent, even in Houston, the home town of Jonathan's Energy team.

Perhaps a more symptomatic flaw in Corporate Society is the position of women in it. In a world of an abundance of consumer items--a world based, even more than our own, on *things* and on the accompanying permissive consumerism that controls through the mechanism Marcuse calls "repressive desublimation"--it is not surprising that, of the three women we see enough to understand (they are important in the film if not in the society), two are successively "on assignment" to Jonathan's bed, and the third, his former wife, was taken from him, Jonathan says, "because an executive wanted her."

But it is not only women who are objects in this world: Corporate Society objectifies everyone, at least outside the executive class, and the stars among them are the rollerball players. A familiar sexual myth is built up around their virility, but their position in the social mythology is strategic on a more fundamental level. As Bartholemew tells Moonpie, after offering him a pill the way we might offer a beer: "You'll dream you're an executive, in a grey suit, making decisions. But do you know what executives dream about? They dream of being great rollerball players." This dream is not only for the executives. What child would not rather be a glamorous sports star than wear a grey suit and make decisions--and children are precisely what the repressively desublimated masses resemble most closely. Rollerball, then, functions as an opiate for the people, a major apparatus of ideological control, diverting attention from the great (bourgeois) dream of upward mobility, in an advanced capitalist society that wants no longer to be dynamic.

But this is not all. The posters that advertise the film tell us: "In the very near future they will produce a war every week during prime time and broadcast it to the rest of the world. They will call it Rollerball," and, "In the not too distant future, war will no longer exist, but there will be Rollerball." Thus both war and not war, the game (and the parallel with Monday Night Football is too clear to miss) is a concrete metaphorical substitution, a social sublimation of whatever it is war's violence signifies, whether an innate human drive or the frustration of existence under Corporate Society (and in our own). Thus the position of rollerball players is strategic in that it is they alone who are to exercise this violence *for* society. And it is no doubt in this connection that the game "serves us," as Bartholemew reminds the Executive Directorate, "by demonstrating the futility of individual effort." "It is not a game," he tells Jonathan, "that one is supposed to grow strong in."

Here, precisely, is the improbable crux of the film: Jonathan's success in the game, in which he has been a star for an unprecedented ten years, threatens to upset the delicate balance of Corporate Society's mass psychological control. This is the only way we can finally understand the first enigma of the film: that Bartholemew asks (he cannot, apparently, *demand*) Jonathan to retire at the height of his career and just before the championship games. And this is why, when Jonathan, whose disobedience is apparently as unprecedented as his success in the game, refuses, the rules are changed in the direction of generating even more violence. For Houston's game with Tokyo, penalties are not called, and when this is not enough, for the game with New York the time limit is removed. Jonathan observes, "The game will be over when we're all dead," but plays anyway, rejecting

Bartholmew's last attempt to buy him off. Ella is sent, but Jonathan, after her (previously quoted) defense of the system, finally says, "Did they tell you to stay if I quit? You're my big reward?" and runs off to erase a multivision (a kind of multiple-screen tv) tape of her he has played in his loneliness.

For Jonathan, having all the *things* he needs, refuses to retire for reasons that can only be described as "romantic," a nostalgia for a freedom he has never known, for basic "human values" (bourgeois individualism) he somehow finds within him. Thus we can see how, in this upside-down, commodity-rich society, it is precisely at the *top* of the underprivileged class that (so the movie says) "revolution" rears its pretty head. It is delivered as though it were a joke, but Bartholemew's comment that the corporation is running out of ways to *pay* its superstar is a serious one. Jonathan is left with only those "spiritual" needs Corporate Society does not know how to satisfy: viz., his love for Ella, his friendship with his teammate Moonpie, and his love (which he shares with Moonpie) of the game itself. Ella is taken from him, first by the executive who desires her (perhaps, it is suggested, because she has been the woman of a rollerball star), and then again when she comes as Bartholemew's agent. Moonpie is made into a vegetable by the no-penalty rule in Tokyo. All he has left is his love for the game. Bartholemew says, "I don't understand your refusal (to retire). I don't think anyone else will either." But to us, hanging on to our own vestigial freedom and our dream of authentic human relationships, Jonathan's refusal is a recognizable gesture.

But the remedy announces defeat: the very necessity of changing the rules of the game so drastically signifies Corporate Society's weakness. For Rollerball is war constrained by rules and a circular track. As the rules begin to vanish, the violence carefully confined within the game begins to reinfect society. First, a small matter, we might think, Jonathan hits Daphne, one of his bed assignments, drawing blood. Then comes his realization in the Japanese hospital that, even off the track, "There are no rules." Then there is the careless violence in a scene reminiscent of Fellini, in which late night partygoers, executives and their women, after seeing and re-running a multivision "special" on Jonathan's career, gratuituously destroy a row of elm trees with a flame-throwing handgun. And then there are the fights which break out in the stands during the New York game, when the rules have all but vanished. Of course all this violence is futile, undirected, self-indulgent. But it signifies the breakdown of the mechanism of control.

As in a teen-age sports novel, everything comes to a head in the championship game. With no penalties and no time limit, death, and at least one refusal to go back on the track, leave Jonathan finally alone with two New Yorkers, a biker and a skater, one of whom has the ball. He kills the skater against the rail in front of Bartholemew's seat, and though we know how he means this death, it is still hard to take from a "hero." But these are the conventions of a gladiator movie. It is the game itself that kills the skater, as we see when, with the ball in his hand, Jonathan stops in mid-swing and does *not* smash the face of the *last* New York player, escaping, in this suspense of gesture, the ruleless anarchy the game has become. For a moment we think he is going to throw the ball at his real enemy, Bartholemew, behind his protective screen, but instead he skates around the track, playing what's left of his beloved game, scoring the "winning" goal for Houston and for himself.

During this whole sequence the fans stop fighting among themselves and maintain an almost church-like silence until, during Jonathan's "victory laps" after the goal, a chant is begun by the team manager (an executive) and continued by the crowd: "JON-A-THAN, JON-A-THAN, JON-A-THAN." We are clearly to believe this to be a significant historical event (or at least that the executives think so), providing the people with a hero, or at least a role model, who has liberated, focused, and transformed their random violence into a chant in his honor. How this is to change Corporate Society is left a mystery, but this much is clear: Jonathan's choice of gesture, scoring the goal instead of throwing the ball at Bartholemew, is a gesture towards *re-containing* that briefly liberated violence and *against* the kind of popular revolt that might have been signalled if not started by the more impetuous gesture he rejects. And we remember, if we have not before, that Norman Jewison's previous film was JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR.

We need not long wonder what this movie is trying to say to *us*, for Corporate Society is not so unlike an image of our own. On the one hand, Corporate Society resembles the American Consumer Society in which we--at least those of us who can afford three dollars to see the film--live, in which even factory workers have two tv's, and in which wars are something that happen elsewhere, in the eastern and southern hemispheres. Corporate Society's "dream world" is a world we live, if not one that "really" exists beyond the boundaries of our middle-class American lives. But the "real world" outside is like Corporate Society too--a world of multinationals, of bankrupt cities if not nations, of sexism, of classism, of commodity fetishism, of Monday Night Football, and a recently televised Viet Nam. What is ROLLERBALL, then, but an assertion--in the face of our culture's manifest failure to end wars and to provide universal satisfaction of what we might call "animal needs" (hunger, sexual desire), that certain "human" (i.e., bourgeois, Christian) values are the important ones. A hollow message for the hungry. "Whom," we hardly need ask, "does ROLLERBALL serve?"

But perhaps it is not the particular ideological decoding of the film that is most interesting here, but rather a *logical* problem that arises *in* the decoding. For though, like ZARDOZ, for example, ROLLERBALL is a puzzle--the puzzle of constructing a set of presuppositions that will hold the various moments of the film in some kind of intelligible totality--it is unclear to what extent, and with what honesty, the puzzle constitutes the appeal. Certainly we respond to the game itself if we like the film at all (I heard more than one cry of "More Rollerball" during the quiet interludes), and this response makes *us* the manipulated masses for whom the game was invented. ROLLERBALL, then, has the curious effect of making us condemn ourselves for falling for its main attraction.

How are we to take this? It seems to me that one way is to see that the puzzle, and the absurdity of the plot, are there, as in ZARDOZ, to give us a way to excuse ourselves for enjoying (if we do) a movie that exploits violence, and exploits our fear of our alleged "innate" need for at least vicarious violence. But perhaps our violence has a more positive meaning, one that the film tries to defuse--perhaps it is a sign of our *own* rebellion against the nascent Corporate Society that is the monopoly capitalism in the belly of which we live--a rebellion with respect to which Jonathan's example is as empty as Christ's tomb. □

MEN'S LIVES
The Oppressor's Oppression

--Richard Freudenheim

MEN'S LIVES, a documentary film by Josh Hanig and Will Roberts, is about the men in our culture: denying their fears, playing tough, performing--performing not just in order to provide, own, consume, but in order that these activities signify manliness. This material is not new, not unexpected, but the film is good evidence that the most familiar experience is often the most trenchant locus of oppression, the most difficult to grasp critically and change.

The core of the film is a series of interviews. A high school student, gymnast and dancer, talks about his anxiety that his peers will think him a sissy and about displeasing his parents, but concludes that a man has to do what he thinks is right. Jerald, who works in a factory in Dayton, speaks of alienated labor, lets us know (in so many words) that he knows his employer has bought his labor as a commodity, demurring though that he's never personally attended a board meeting. So this is not really an analysis, does not for Jerald involve a political perspective. Jerald is also worried about security--having money--, about providing for his family, about playing the man's role. He won't let his wife work--though she wants to and although she'd rather work so that Jerald wouldn't work overtime and they could spend more time together. For Jerald a woman's place is in the home, children need their mother, and he's not the type to mop the floors, etc. Yes, he admits, he drinks, sometimes too much. Men don't talk much *with* each other about emotional things.

Little girls want to be boys, boys get to mow the lawn, although factory work is dirtier than housework. No little boy wants to be a girl, a sissy. The grammar school teacher admits that she pushes the boys harder than the girls because boys grow up to economic responsibilities, competition. A black youth in a poolhall talks about wanting to own a car and a house and about how he would take care of them so that people would see and know. Across town the kid with the hot-rod values it because people--not just the girls!--notice. He leaves a strip of rubber. Puberty is a tough time, boys have to act like men. The shy-smiling football star plays to kill--kill or be killed--and to get to college on a scholarship.

The radio talk-show personality, complacent ideologue, cites Scripture as authority for the natural superiority of men, and the law of survival of the fittest validates competition. A high school basketball coach who teaches a course that is supposed to prepare students for family life believes that a man's responsibility to his family is financial success--the $20,000 house, the new car. He thinks that there's just something wrong with anyone who isn't bothered by losing and he says that he's not the emotional type, doesn't cry, while the camera catches him gripping the arm of his chair.

A barber is the psychoanalyst and sociologist in this film; he overhears it all, he hears things even the father-confessor doesn't. He confirms this reality: men do suppress their feelings; they talk about the car, the house, the kids, about frustration on the job; the only place most men are touched by another man is sitting in the barber's chair. There can be no success because there is always another guy around the corner who's got two nicer cars in his driveway, explains the black educator at Antioch College. "Can't get no satisfaction...," likewise, at the freshman mixer where there are "those girls who do and those who don't," and the point is to get one up to your room.

A man does what he thinks is right. These typical, quite poignant images of everyday life in America display in sum: alienated labor or the relations of production of surplus value, the fetishism of commodities and private property, competition and individualism, sexual repression and the commodification of social relations, the sexist religiosity and vulgar scientism of bourgeois ideology--although these are not the terms, not the rhetoric, of the film. The filmmakers believe, they say in the conclusion of the voice-over narration that ties the interviews together, that an economic system which requires competitive, repetitive work produces such lives and values, and the montage of images that provides the background to the interviews underscores this point throughout the film.

MEN'S LIVES is an important film because it is the first of its kind, for what distinguishes this film from the presentation of rather similar material in a film like HEARTS AND MINDS and from innumerable other treatments of alienation in capitalist society is that MEN'S LIVES focuses on men's oppression as a subject in its own right, rather than as an aspect of another story. Such a focus suggests that an awareness of men's oppression is a necessary component in and part of the justification for the struggle for radical social change, though not in itself sufficient. Personal change, as the filmmakers say toward the end of their narration, is not enough, nor does it substitute for class struggle. MEN'S LIVES is indelibly a middle class film, a film made by two Antioch students developing the slide film they made in a course in Media and Social Change. Nevertheless we hope to be able to look back on MEN'S LIVES as a milestone in the emergence of a men's movement in much the same way that feminists look back to GROWING UP FEMALE (1971), one of the earliest films to take the oppression of women as a focus in its own right.

MEN'S LIVES draws much of its strength and timeliness from the ex-

ample of the women's movement. The voice-over narration begins by explaining that the film is made by two men about to graduate from college, that at this transitional point in their lives they wanted to look at the kinds of roles available to them as men. Women, they note, have already begun to question their assigned place in the social structure.

MEN'S LIVES is in fact closely modeled on the formula used in GROWING UP FEMALE, and shares some of the problems of that format. It looks into the process of male socialization and the values promulgated thereby in order to begin to go about answering the question that informs the film--what alternatives are possible? Predictably, and like GROWING UP FEMALE, the film doesn't really answer the question that ostensibly generated it, but it does reveal the isolation of men and their entrapment in an ideology that disguises the regimentation of work, idealizes competition, and renders them politically powerless. So although the film fails to present real alternatives, the clarity of its diagnosis has a certain political value in providing a basis for discussion and consciousness raising. For the same reason it is excusable that the film doesn't present much of the material that immediately comes to mind as pertinent--e.g., the lives of other classes of men (gays, prisoners, the elderly, etc.), men's intimate sexual experience, the structure of family life, men who are experimenting with alternative life styles. The film delineates the social and economic structure in which men live and work, and its dominant ideology, as the core of the matter.

If the limitations of the film are in this sense its strengths, it is similarly true that the film uncritically reflects to some degree the very contradictions it aims to expose. The filmmakers have chosen to make a professional, straight-forward, readily accessible film--the sort of documentary that might and hopefully will be seen on PBS television. In doing so they have implicitly defined their audience and scope of effectiveness.

With its emphasis on adolescence the film will probably be most effective in provoking discussion in high schools and on the campuses. Perhaps for this reason there was an element of smugness in the applause of audiences with whom I saw the film in Berkeley and San Francisco. These audiences, to judge by the discussion following the screening, were already familiar with the topic and committed to the struggle around sexual politics. The point is that in aiming to make a film that would appeal to a broad audience the filmmakers have produced a film that remains vulnerable to being assimilated and depoliticized by the very ideology it seeks to confront.

MEN'S LIVES is an undeniable achievement, and in talking about its vulnerability to the dominant ideology I don't want to detract from that achievement. But its success raises some questions that reach beyond the film and the intentions of the filmmakers. MEN'S LIVES speaks directly to a relevant issue, but it has not adequately accounted for the overdetermined context within which this communication is taking place. Bourgeois ideology is overdetermined, a beast with a lot of heads; its potency and predominance lies after all in its ability to absorb contradictions and challenges. It is only in the interests of potentially more effective political documentaries that MEN'S LIVES needs to be criticized in terms of the relationship between form and ideology.

[The example of Godard's work (especially the films of Godard-Gorin) is pertinent here as a kind of model of the way a film might resist assimilation to the dominant ideology and of the way the automatic, conventional and self-serving responses of an audience might be inhibited. Every political film does not have to defend itself formally with the rigor and inventiveness characteristic of Godard's work, but the problematic within which Godard's work is inscribed is also the ideological context of political documentaries like MEN's LIVES.]

Neither the alienation depicted by the film nor the ubiquity of bourgeois values in which it is situated are new insights, but they are both difficult to keep in mind. We live in what Marcuse has called a one-dimensionality, even though the varieties of individual personalities and the plenitude of available sensory stimuli often seem to pose more differences and more alternatives than we can cope with as individuals. Perhaps unwittingly, the documentary objectivity of MEN'S LIVES records the one-dimensionality of bourgeois ideology. It reminds us that you can hold a microphone before virtually any American male and record more or less the same message. Whether the man interviewed has a critical perspective or is trying to convince himself and others of the propriety and eternality of the status quo doesn't really matter. The camera reveals the pathos and powerlessness of the one, the contradictory foolishness and realism of the other.

But such filmic objectivity is not enough to reveal possible alternatives. Moreover, because in MEN'S LIVES it is focused on individuals interviewed and never records the interactions of groups of men, the film allows for a response that denies the possibility of alternatives. There is a tendency to get overly involved in the personalities interviewed in the film, to clutch to individuality, perhaps as a defense against their representative typicality. Similarly, because we seem eternally capable for nostalgia for even the worst of past times, the scenes from an American boy's childhood lose their critical edge.

In the discussion following the screening one man in the San Francisco audience rebuked those who made the more political comments by saying that there was a lot of joy in the film. There really is; but the film fails to defend itself against the potential for depoliticization in this response and in some ways encourages it. Like the focus on individuals in the interviews, the voice-over narration is spoken from a subjective point of view. Doubtless this is a better choice than the impersonal, objective narration that the filmmakers tried and discarded, but on the other hand, the narrator limits himself primarily to the description of subjective experience. The voice of this narrator belongs to Will Roberts, who also does the interviewing, but again in these interactive situations the focus is on the subject being interviewed, the more or less isolated man, rather than on the exchange of experience and insight. When Roberts sits in the barber chair having his hair cut, interviewing the barber, he again only asks questions and looks away from the camera in a conspicuously self-conscious way.

This is all the more discouraging because it is, after all, the fact that a film like MEN'S LIVES is being made that contains proof of the possibility for change and alternatives in a most immediate way. By its very nature film is a collective and social activity, but MEN'S LIVES in aiming to be a professional type of product has cut away the social interactions that surround the final text. More information of the kind that Josh Hanig gets into in the accompanying interview could have been incorporated into the film--information about the way the film came into being, the way material was gathered and edited, the way such films are distributed, etc. Such a greater emphasis on the process of making the film could have helped to inhibit the film's vulnerability to the dominant ideology, particularly the ideology of individualism.

At the same time this emphasis on process might have extended the film in a self-reflexively critical way. As the audience we meet a number of men in this film who from our point of view have something in common by virtue of having been interviewed for the film, something in common not wholly given by the dominant ideology and therefore a possible common ground for alternative kinds of interactions. Not only would we have liked to have seen the interviewer and his subject talking more as equals, we would have liked to see the men interviewed talking with each other, perhaps about the film, or perhaps only about their resistance to doing so.

Formally, MEN'S LIVES tries to be objective about subjective experience, but in doing so it denies that filmmaking, and making a film about men's oppression particularly, is a potentially radical form of social activity. Certain aspects of the movie industry that serves as the instrument of the dominant ideology--the Hollywood star system, and auteurism, for example--also entail a denial of the collective effort that goes into any film. Similarly, in the background montage of images in MEN'S LIVES the typicality of the social setting it presents fails to define any common ground for social interactions. A greater local specificity here, giving for instance the names of the film sites, their social composition, etc., would have at least helped to put the interviews in their real social settings. This would have helped to distinguish film sites of MEN'S LIVES from the on-location mise-en-scene of films like AMERICAN GRAFFITI.

For these reasons the talk in the narration about change and alternatives has an element of ingenuousness and is also vulnerable to assimilation by the film's ideological enemy. There is a place in bourgeois ideology for sympathy with subjective suffering and frustration, and also a place for reforming commitment to its amelioration. On an ideological level it is in fact not oppression, or suffering, or frustration, per se that makes men powerless, it is paradoxically the idea that they *as individuals* have power to change their condition. This is precisely the false consciousness that gets men, and especially men who like Jerald in the film have a kind of analysis, trapped into competitive and aggressive modes. Conceiving of themselves as individuals, men will continue to be sexists, continue to be objectively though perhaps unconsciously the victims of an oppressive social order. Personal change is not enough, but is also certainly not irrelevant. The appropriate areas of personal change however need to be carefully delimited and the relation of personal change to social change carefully defined.

The notion that things can be changed is built into the dominant ideology and serves to disguise the extent of the terror of our alienation. There are certainly ways of changing personally that entail no alteration whatsoever in the structures that produce ubiquitous alienation. There are on the other hand possibilities for radical changes that originate in a full awareness of individual powerlessness, an awareness for instance that it is capitalism not personal failure that produces unemployment.

Alternatives to men's lives as we have known and lived them will bring men into social relations for which there are not now models, nor preconceived formulae. The film shows no such experiments and it is not made in such a way as to suggest alternative modes of male sociality. Nevertheless, despite its complicity with the dominant ideology both in form and substance, it remains a political film in the context of an emerging men's movement in the struggle around sexual politics. MEN'S LIVES does not itself bring men together in new ways, but it does instigate men to admit at least to the sexism, unhappiness, hypocrisy and powerlessness of their lives. This is a place to begin. □

Interview with Josh Hanig

MEN'S LIVES AND STRUGGLE

Will Roberts interviewing the barber

--Richard Freudenheim and John Hess

In the spring of 1973 Josh Hanig, Will Roberts, and Peter Sonenthal were all students in Julia Reichert and Jim Klein's course, "Media and Social Change," at Antioch College. As their final project in the course, the three men made a slide-tape on male socialization and identity. The slide-tape--a combination of slides and taped interviews--got such an enthusiastic response from the various people who saw it, that they decided to make it into a movie.

JOSH: We went to the Dean and some faculty at Antioch and proposed the project to them. We told them what we had in mind, said we needed some money and worked out a tuition rebate, sort of a grant from Antioch of $2,500 which set us off; we had the money to start out and we just went ahead.

JOHN: Where did the rest of the money come from?

JOSH: Much was credit from the lab. My parents gave some money, because I had worked hard to get an extra quarter out of the way at Antioch so I figured that they had gotten a deal on my education and talked them into giving me some money. They were really enthusiastic about it too. I'm from a middle class background; not a lot of people are able to do that, go to their parents and ask for some money to start a film. It wasn't a lot of money, but they gave us some. We didn't initially go to Jim and Julia, but toward the end when we had much of the film done and we needed the money to go ahead and finish it but couldn't get funding, they went ahead and loaned us a substantial amount.

JOHN: What did the film cost?

JOSH: $12,000, which for a production like this was cheap. It was so cheap partly because Jim and Julia had an editing table; they had a Nagra sound recorder that we were able to use as much as we wanted. We hustled a camera from Wright State University. It's a state university near Yellow Springs, near Antioch.

So without much experience, but with money and enthusiasm, Josh, Will and Peter set out to make MEN'S LIVES. A lot has happened since then. They made the film. It is a success although not above criticism (including their own). Will and Josh have moved to San Francisco to make more films and distribute New Day films. Will has just received a grant from the AFI to produce a film about men in the military. Peter dropped out of the project near the beginning and is now a student at Columbia. In the summer of 1975, while the film was playing to packed houses all over the Bay Area, we interviewed Josh Hanig in Berkeley. That long conversation was then edited down to its present length and form.

RICHARD: Josh, we know from what you have said so far that Julia Reichert and Jim Klein played an influential role in the production of MEN'S LIVES. Would you say some more about that.

JOSH: Indirectly the film grew out of a class we took with them called "Media for Political Change," which they had taught two or three times at Antioch. After the class we decided to make the film, but I don't think that without Jim and Julia being really close by and providing a certain inspiration--that is, of knowing they had made GROWING UP FEMALE when they were students and that they had done it without very much experience at all--we wouldn't have started unless we knew somebody could do that. Anyway, for the first year they weren't all that involved--they were busy working on the Methadone film. But towards the end when we were trying to construct the film at the editing table, our inexperience caught up with us and we asked Jim to come in and work with us. In a matter of a couple of months he was able to really pull the film together, to give it flow and punch. Of course, from looking at his work you can see he's one of the most skilled editors working in this country. They also gave us equipment, financial assistance and moral support.

RICHARD: I noticed a similarity between MEN'S LIVES and GROWING UP FEMALE. They both seem to follow the same formula: you look at children, the process of socialization, asking a question about what kinds of roles are available to women and sort of displaying a series of roles, all of which are oppressive.

JOSH: I first saw it right after it was made. The first time I saw it I wasn't very impressed with it.

RICHARD: Why is that?

JOSH: A lot of my friends were feminists and I had already been exposed to a lot of the things that were in the film and personally I didn't feel like I learned that much from it. Although as I looked at it in a different light, in terms of it being something geared to a very mass audience, I really saw how valuable it was. Since then I know Jim and Julia have criticisms of the film in terms of not presenting enough alternatives and not presenting women as strong and changing, but that was five years ago. That film was tremendously useful. We had the advantage of being able to look at it and try to go beyond it. When we had a rough cut of MEN'S LIVES we sent it to the New Day meeting in June of last year (1974). We wanted them to look at the film to see if they wanted to take it or not. They thought it needed a lot of work and they thought the narration needed a personal touch. They wanted us to talk personally, because it was a big contradiction for us not to do that. So Julia (Reichert) brought it back with a lot of their criticisms and suggestions. And she worked with us on the narration, getting the wording right. She's really good at that, at putting narration together. She worked with us very closely on the wording; we must have had 10 different cuts with 10 totally different narrations.

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

RICHARD: What kind of changes in your life, as a man in America, does making the film represent, and what kind of changes has it brought about? What kind of changes did you go through?

JOSH: You mean prior to making it, what kind of changes did I, personally, go through?

RICHARD: You could have grown up in America, graduated from college and gone on into....whatever it is, straight through....

JOSH: Right.

RICHARD: ...and been one of the people interviewed in the film and have said what they say. What kind of change happened to you, so that at a certain point you stopped and made a film about this?

JOSH: Well, personally, for me it's been a pretty gradual kind of process. I can't really pinpoint it. In high school I was sort of a high school radical. From as far back as I can remember I was really revolted by all the things I encountered in school. I think a lot of it's just a reaction to authority. I was revolted by all the stuff I saw around me and I wanted to change it but I didn't have any idea how. When I left home and was exposed to a lot of radical activity and meeting a lot of people who were socialists, I just gradually began to formulate an analysis of the society as a whole. And I fit into that all those things I encountered in high school, or in jobs that I had....how they fit into that sort of undefined rebellion. You know that's the amazing thing when you start to realize that, you start to gain an analysis and you understand what makes you frustrated, what makes you alienated. In a sense it makes you more frustrated because you can see it, and can define it, and it's so awesome you don't know what the hell to do about it. But in another sense it's very encouraging, you know, I get a lot of support from that kind of analysis.

RICHARD: Why did you choose to make a film about men's lives, about masculinity? Instead of, say, unemployment or finding a job in America, the educational system, or rebellion against authority? Why did you center on masculinity?

JOSH: I think that one of the reasons that I was attracted to it was that I saw more and more that women around me, through the women's movement, had begun to personally identify their oppression. The women's movement, in a sense, spoke to a really broad number of people that hadn't been spoken to before. People's sexuality, in the whole society, is just an immense part of their whole being.

RICHARD: How did the women's movement speak to you?

JOSH: It spoke to me, I guess, in the sense that, personally, I always had sexually had a hard time playing the kinds of games that were expected of me, in terms of being a man, having to make the first move towards women, or else just not having any kind of relationship with women at all. I always felt that pressure was a real burden I didn't like having, and I think I sort of identified that through the women's movement as something that related to me personally.

RICHARD: How did you get from that to the film? and its relation to the women's movement?

JOSH: Well, I think that the women's movement when it first began to get a lot of publicity really threatened a lot of men, alienated a lot of men. I saw in it the seeds of something that really could liberate men from all the things we talked about in the film. Only it's very difficult to pinpoint that when...you know, you can view it as women taking your job away from you, or women threatening your sexuality. You know, those kinds of things. If you see that the interest of the women's movement, that the interest of the issues brought up by the women's movement, are really in a sense in your interest, then I think personally it makes it a lot easier to change and fight.

RICHARD: Then how does the film relate to the women's movement?

JOSH: Well, I guess in a few senses a lot of women in the audience who have seen the film have said to me that they never realized the pressures and anxieties that men went through. You know, the socialization of roles has been very clearly articulated as being oppressive to them; it hasn't been articulated as being oppressive to men. But that's touchy because while men are in the position of being the oppressors of women, the majority of men are also in the position of being oppressed by that same system that oppresses women. So the masses of men have felt that their interests were aligned with the oppressors of women, with the men who were the oppressors of women because they were men; rather than breaking it down into a class thing--see what I mean?

Certain parts of the women's movement have mistakenly identified the source of their oppression as men. Of course, the mass media has picked up on this and used it as a divisive force--reducing the movement to a "battle of the sexes." In relation to this MEN'S LIVES has

helped by attempting to identify the enemy not as men per se, but as the class structure of society which is controlled and ruled by oppressive men. The film unquestionably stands in solidarity with the women's movement.

RICHARD: So that one of the ways to show that the interests of feminism are also the interests of men is to reveal the kind of oppression that men are under?

JOSH: Right. In other words, if men can look at those things that socialize women into being oppressed and they see that these are the same forces that also oppress them, they see they have something in common with women rather than being pitted against them.

GETTING IT TOGETHER

JOHN: When you got the camera and decided to make a movie out of the slide tape, was the idea originally just to film the interviews you already had or was the idea to go from there to make something completely new?

JOSH: The idea was something completely new. We wanted to have a working class kind of perspective. We wanted to interview people while they were working, at their workplaces. We wanted an executive type who had made it according to American standards and we wanted someone who was working class and was always trying to reach "the American dream" and wasn't able to. We wanted to interview lots of kids to show the actual socialization process. We sort of had stereotypes, I guess, of people we wanted to interview. We didn't want stereotypes, but as I look back on it I think we saw them as stereotypes in a sense.

We pretty much wanted to stay away from "experts." We thought one or two might work out. We talked to some, but they were complete assholes. So what we would end up doing was thinking "where are the places we can go where we'll meet the kinds of people we want in the film?" We went to bars, to union halls, barber shops, fraternities, college campuses, schools, all over the place and on intuition we started talking to people. We met Gerald at a union hall. I saw in the paper that there was a strike, so we went over to the union hall, walked around, talked to some people who didn't have much to say. We were walking away discouraged and I said "goddamit, we've been doing this for months and can't find anybody who's articulate about their work life." Gerald was standing there and I said, "Do you know anybody around here who would be willing to do an interview?" At first glance he didn't look that interesting to me. He said, "Yeh, what do you want to talk about?" Gerald had a real sense that he had a lot to say to us, and he did. During the interview we were getting more and more excited as he was saying a lot of things we wanted him to say, that we thought were important.

JOHN: Did you formulate typical questions that you wanted to ask most people? Was that part of writing the scenario?

JOSH: The way you formulate the question is really important. We found that if we were asking very loaded questions, if we were asking "do-you-think" type questions, they would answer yes or no. We had to try to get people to talk to us rather than just answer us. A lot depended on the people we interviewed. The people who we tended to use in the film were pretty verbal people, so they were easier to interview.

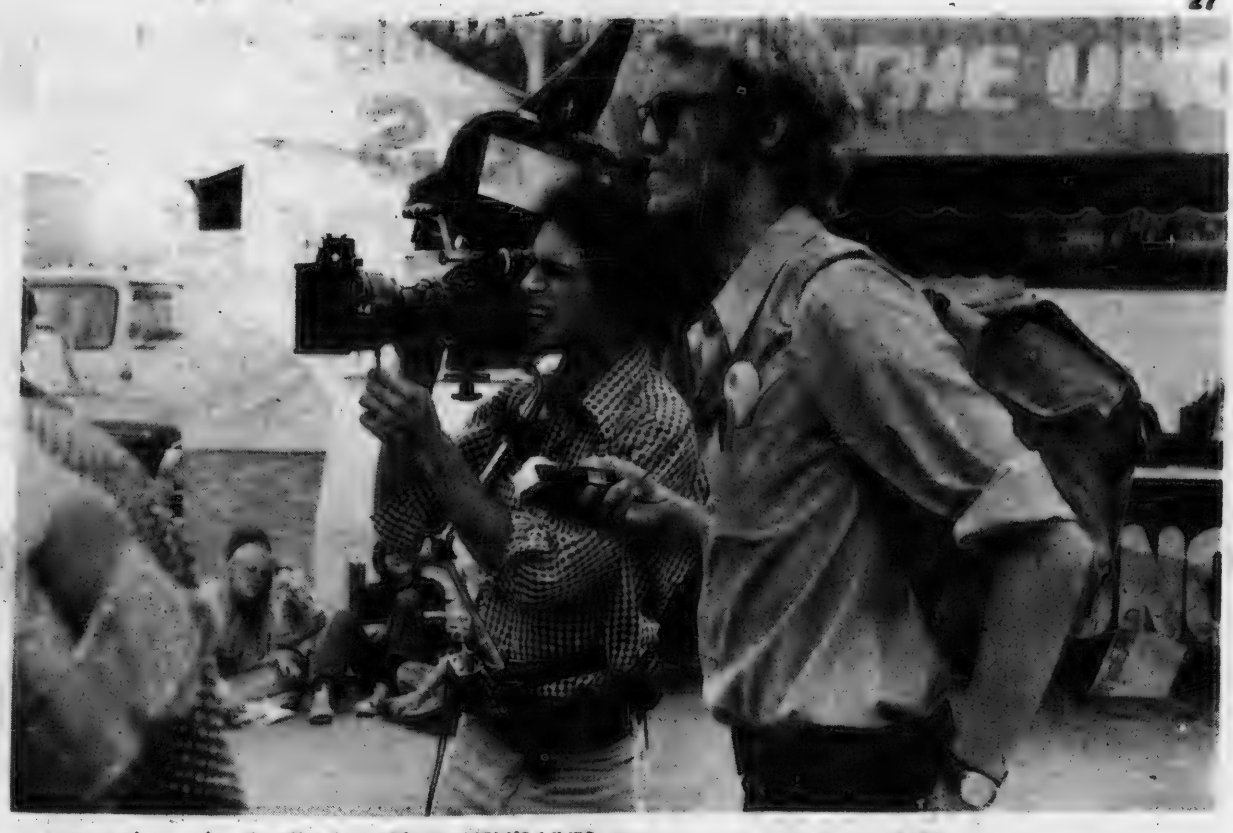
JOHN: Do you think that gives a particular slant to the film? Many of the people you talked to had pretty well articulated raps about things. And one of the weaknesses we felt in some of the interviews was that they had the rap and there wasn't any way of breaking through it. You could see that what they were saying wasn't what they really thought. I remember the school teacher with the $20,000 house. He was saying that he didn't have very many emotions, but he was sitting there wringing his hands. His face muscles were tightening. There was a lot of emotion right there that he wasn't letting through. But he had a rap that he gave about his life. I was curious why you didn't challenge somebody like that school teacher.

JOSH: Well, I think the one time we challenged somebody, it worked really well. It was the school teacher. He had just talked about emotions and given a very removed analysis of it. And Will asked him when he cried last. We caught him. He fidgeted, and fidgeted, and fidgeted, and then said, "I'm not a very emotional person. I don't cry."

RICHARD: Were the preliminary interviews better for your purposes than what people actually said on camera? Were they freer, more articulate? After the screening in San Francisco you said that both Joe and also Gerald had some resistance to actually being filmed.

JOSH: Yes, we had some problems with that. We found that some people actually changed their answers when they got on camera. I think that between the preliminary interviews and the time we shot, which was a few days or a week later, they had a chance to think about what they had said when we first talked to them, and maybe they didn't want to say on camera what they had said on tape.

People feel their personal lives are private and they're very concerned about what other people are going to think of them, of what their friends will think of them and how they'll come across. They want to come across as feeling positive about their lives. It was clear, for example, from Gerald's preliminary interviews



Josh Hanig (camera) and Will Roberts filming MEN'S LIVES

that he was much less satisfied with his life than he appeared to be on the camera. Once he got on camera, he talked about being happy, and so on. We did two on-camera interviews with Gerald. In the preliminary round of interviews all he did was run down the bosses and the factory and how fucked up it was. Then when we interviewed him on camera the first time he toned that down a lot. We were dissatisfied with that interview when we saw the rushes, so we went back again. He got into it a little bit more then. We kept bringing him back to it, asking him time and again about his work until he started talking about it. We kept probing him.

RICHARD: Did you talk about your dissatisfaction with Gerald, or explain to him that you wanted the heavy stuff from the preliminary interviews?

JOSH: No, I think we did that more with the questioning.

RICHARD: The reason I'm asking is that the resistance you are talking about is part of the problem raised by the film; that men resist displaying emotion, resist talking about the things which come out of their personal lives that they aren't happy about. I was wondering how you would feel about presenting some of that resistance in the film. For example you talked (in San Francisco) about calling Joe up and urging him to go on camera because he had said that he thought a man should do what he thinks is right. That whole process of coming to say something on tape, then resisting saying it on film and then finally agreeing to say it, would have been very poignant in the film. Another possibility I thought of was that it would have been interesting to have filmed that scene at the union hall with Gerald that you just described: you and Will going around asking people to do interviews and not finding anyone until you met Gerald. It would have been nice to know that you met Gerald on strike and to have known about the strike issues, though that would have meant staging things for the film.

JOSH: Yeh, a lot of it was logistics. The strike was over by the time we did the on-camera interview. I always had the conception that when people made films they had control over their material, a very strong idea of what they wanted, and went about getting it by hook or by crook. I didn't realize you can't control circumstances and events.

RICHARD: Restaging some of the things that happened as part of the process of making the film for the film itself would have meant getting yourselves into the film in a different way than you were. The thing about Joe's resistance, for instance...

JOSH: You mean having him talk about it, asking him about it on camera? To a certain extent we did do that. In the film he says he was afraid to do the interview because he was afraid of what people would think of him.

RICHARD: What about the barber, did you get to know him well? He did a lot of reporting and didn't talk too much about himself.

JOSH: Yes, we got to know him really well. Actually he did talk about himself a lot, but we didn't put it in the film because what he was saying was pretty depressing. It's hard for me to say because I really don't want to talk about his life. He wanted to keep it personal. He went through a lot of changes while we were filming. I think that's why he was in such a pensive state of mind while he was talking. He said a lot of things he said because he was forced to reexamine much of what he had accepted.

JOHN: What you are saying about the barber is an example of one of the key problems. In the film the barber gives the impression of being someone who really has it together, a really secure man who has worked in a barber shop for 26 years and feels good about it, a man who has this whole rap about the people who come in. In reality his actual life was quite different from that. One of the main things men do is develop raps, modes, superficial ways of acting in society all of which are designed primarily to hide what they really feel. It seems like it would have been instructive to break that down.

JOSH: The film is surfacey in that respect. But how do you reconcile that when you want to make a film that will say a particular thing to people and you want to have control over what the film says? We wanted to have the barber as a positive figure. How do you deal with his contradictions, with all the problems in his life, as well as have him say all those positive things he says without having people come away even less optimistic than they do? In a sense what we are doing is very manipulative.

JOHN: This is speculative, but I wonder if it would have been more instructive to have replaced the barber's rap about other people with a revelation of him? A lot of the things he says were already said in the narration or by other people in the film. I think the male socialization is so much the building up of this barrier. I thought Gerald was the most interesting person in the film because he was the one person whose barrier begins to crack, and who I felt I got to know. When Gerald begins telling how fucked his life is, you get behind that barrier that we all put up and struggle with. The topics you bring up--the alienation, the expression of emotion--are important too, but the barriers that men put up, which are always in front of the viewer, are the most visible thing about the men you interviewed, wasn't analyzed.

JOSH: You use the word instructive....If we had put the personal stuff about the barber in the film it would have been instructive, in the sense that people would have seen this man talking personally, emotionally, putting down his facade. That's something very rare, but how does that revelation line up against the content of what that person says, taking into account that it is very depressing? What does that say to people? We didn't want people to come away feeling depressed personally. As he talks in the film as it is, he's doing something that most men don't do.

JOHN: It's interesting that you say you didn't want the film to be depressing. Isn't what you are talking about depressing? The whole subject of the film--men's lives--once you gain an analysis of what it is like to be a man in a capitalist society, there is something very depressing about it all.

JOSH: If people are depressed when they come away from the film, do you think it makes them confront what it is that makes them depressed?

JOHN: I'm not sure about that. But I see a contradiction in making undepressing something which is in fact very depressing. It's a little like the happy end on a feature film which up to that ending is tragic. Sometimes a depressing film can be very educational. A film like VIDAS SECAS shows what the lives of the peasants in the Brazilian Northeast are really like, it bores into that way of life and shows how depressing it really is. When you start talking about it, you see that it is a very educational film.

RICHARD: It seems like there is a difference between things that are personally depressing and things that are socially depressing. You don't want to make people personally depressed about their own lives. There was no context in the film for the barber's personal story. Set in a much broader social context, with some analysis, it wouldn't have been just depressing. I can definitely see how somebody laying down their misery could be very counterproductive.

JOSH: You create a certain amount of pity

for that particular person. You have to be very careful about that. I think the Gerald part was successful because you don't come away feeling pity for Gerald even though he did break through that barrier. You have a lot of respect for him for doing it, you have a lot of respect for the way he talked. I think with a lot of people you might produce the opposite reaction--"the poor guy." That's a complicated problem when you try to think about what makes people change. Over the last few years I've been affected a lot by the theory that a truly revolutionary film has to have an up ending: a collective solution to the probelms, people feeling like they are struggling and changing all those things. Now I don't know if I'm completely ready to accept that notion. I haven't seen it done successfully very much. SALT OF THE EARTH to a certain extent. But even when it is done well I wonder how much more effective it is than making people depressed. That is an important issue that I have to personally resolve before I start another film. The problem is that a depressing film can add to the cynicism that is pervasive these days and cynicism is not a revolutionary emotion.

RICHARD: Was the final montage of fathers and sons meant to be an up ending?

JOSH: Yeh, and the question asked at the end of the film is how do we change. It's a very token thing to have these pictures of men hugging their kids, that kind of thing. It's effective, but doesn't have great substance.

JOHN: It seems in a way to undercut what comes before.

JOSH: It certainly doesn't grow out of what came before.

JOHN: Did you ever think of getting some of the people in the film together to talk to each other--like Gerald and Joe?

JOSH: We really want to do that. I'm going back to Yellow Springs next month and that's one of the first things I want to organize--to get Joe and Gerald and the barber together and get their responses.

JOHN: And make another film out of that?

JOSH: I hadn't really thought about that. I'd be interested to see how they responded to each other and to the film. Do you think that would be an interesting film?

RICHARD: I think so! Because one of the interesting things the film turned up is that everyone knows the same things about their lives. You ask them certain questions and you can get a broad spectrum of talk that reiterates the same thing at all levels. But one of the problems obviously is people talking to each other about it. And the film is a way of cutting down on some of the fear people have talking together. It would be good to see people actually trying to do that. Having some experience in a men's group, that's a real issue. The men's group thing is week after week, people not only realizing that they can share stuff or that it is the same, but sort of going deeper into it and working out just how to talk about it to each other. It would have been nice to see what would have happened if Gerald and Joe and the barber and some of the others could, on the basis of what they all articulated in the film, find some kind of way of getting together around it. It would have been interesting to see people do that. And also you guys in the film, because you and Will were basically talking to people about these things.

JOSH: Do you think if Joe and Gerald and the barber had got together and had a discussion with us, and we would have filmed it, that that would have substantially changed what people came away with in terms of the possibilities for changing?

RICHARD: I think it's certainly possible that it would have worked that way.

JOHN: It would depend on how that discussion turned out, but I think it could. I think one problem in the film in terms of being able to change something is that there doesn't seem to be a progression as you move along. It seems to stay at the same level. We don't see anyone change in the film. One question we come away with is how do we change. What do we do? Let's say I identify with Joe or Gerald, and recognize aspects of my life in what they are talking about, what do I do about it?

JOSH: I think that is the biggest and most obvious weakness in the film. Everybody asks me that when I show the film--"How do I change?" "I wish there had been more there for me to grasp on to at the end and feel that I could do something about it."

JOHN: What do you say when people ask you that?

JOSH: Well, I'm really in the process of grappling with that and trying to come up with a good answer. I feel inadequate about that. It depends on who the audience is. If I'm showing it to a high school audience and they ask me that, I feel like I should be able to give them something that they can truly respond to. My inclination is to talk about revolution, but obviously that's a bit too general.

JOHN: How would you go back and do it now? I mean the ending narration tries to overcome that in a way that's sort of artificial in terms of the film. The film doesn't build up to it. Looking at it now, how would you go back and remake the film beginning with that narration or growing out of it or making the film come to that narration?

JOSH: Well, considering that the style of the film is talking to other men and finding out what they are thinking or what they are doing, we probably would have put a lot of effort into finding a group of people, men and women, who were struggling with both personal and political changes in a collective supportive fashion. We might show them struggling against sexism both within their group and in their community--the men could be sharing their technical or physical skills with the women and the women could be sharing their emotional or domestic skills with the men. To show the growth and joy of radical activity as well as the struggle could be a constructive ending.

RICHARD: What do you think the effect would have been if you had said at the end of the film as you are saying now, "I don't really know how to go about changing this, but I do know that this seems to be the situation and it has certain relationships to the way people are under capitalism; but I think we have to find some ways of changing."

JOSH: You mean acknowledging that we didn't really know how to change?

RICHARD: Yeah, sort of open the film out at the end.

JOSH: Well, I think that we did do that except for saying that we don't know how to change; all we did say is that we know that to change personally isn't enough, there's also political things that enter in. I don't know if that tends to make it very ambiguous. People will say what sort of change, what are you talking about?

In a sense I'm disappointed about that. It's very hard when you have an analysis of how those things fit together in society and what changes are necessary, but aren't sure about how much of your analysis you should try to impart to the audience. The people in the Dayton (Ohio) media collective helped us on this.

JOHN: Do you think maybe the style of the film itself limits the ability to do that? The objective interview or series of interviews kind of thing? Do you think perhaps that style itself keeps you from going beyond what is, the conditions that exist?

JOSH: Again, in the film it's mostly the people in the film talking to the audience. There's not a lot of interaction amongst the people in the film where they talk about change per se. I think the film could have been a lot more analytical. We didn't have anybody specifically giving an analysis so the only other option we could have had was to say it ourselves which would have meant putting ourselves personally into the film more than we did. In our original scenarios we hadn't planned for us being in the film at all, so when we did inject ourselves we felt to a certain degree that it was alien material.

RICHARD: I didn't respond that way at all. I wanted to see more of you guys and I was hoping that Will, when he was in the barber chair, would get into more of a rap instead of asking questions and being shy to look in the face of the camera.

JOSH: We weren't really aware of our personal role in the film until afterwards, until we had gotten it all back. That's a very male thing--you don't want to put yourself on the line--you know people/filmmakers hiding behind their medium. That's the way film has always been done; we never really started to question it until we were getting toward the end of the project.

RICHARD: The showings here in the Bay Area, at least the ones that I know about, have been incredibly successful. How do you interpret that response?

JOSH: I think it's two things. The film as a film has the reputation of being a good film, a well put together film; and people who are into films like to see a well put together film. But more important, the subject of men, of masculinity, really relates to people.... Men are interested in seeing it because they don't talk about those kinds of things that much and by seeing the film it's some sort of support for the things they are thinking about. Somebody else is thinking about it. And women are interested because the film's about their kids, brothers, lovers, husbands.

RICHARD: Let me ask you this. When you were speaking in San Francisco, you made an interesting equation. You said you wanted to make a "professional, accessible film." I was really struck by putting those two words together.

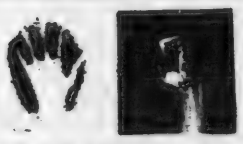
JOSH: Professional, accessible film, do you think there is a contradiction?

RICHARD: Perhaps. I wanted to ask you what you meant by a professional film and what that had to do with accessibility.

JOSH: This is an important question: the question of form. Because ultimately our main concern was the content and message of the film, we felt it was important to use an accessible format. People's expectations are such that they can possibly dismiss content if the form is alien. You must start where the people are at. Also we have a certain amount of respect for traditional forms. We wanted to breathe new life into the standard uses for interviews, music, highly edited sequences. This of course is not the direction the documentary has been headed over the last few years.

JOHN: Isn't there the danger that the more professional the film is the more easily digestible it is? In other words, the more professional the film the more the audience will respond to the professionalism and ignore the message.

JOSH: I don't think most people would do that because they expect films to be well made. Everything they see is done skillfully and slickly if they watch television or go to the movies. That's the accepted standard of the media. It's different with filmmakers or artists or students.



art

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& revolution

They'll get into the form of how you've done it.

JOHN: Is there an underlying message in the fact that you accepted that standard?

JOSH: You mean is that a middle class value that we accept and don't question?

JOHN: Would you rather have made a film that made people uneasy?

JOSH: Uneasy....angry...?

JOHN: ....challenge the audience, make them really angry?

JOSH: (after a long pause) Yeah, angry at...capitalism; not us, which means undefined anger really; focused anger against the system.

JOHN: How would you go about doing that?

JOSH: Maybe focusing more on the powers that be, by presenting the problem of masculinity as we did in the film and by going further and showing what function that role has in the society as it's set up. It has a very important role. It plays into the hands of people who have a lot of power in this country. And if people were able to identify that more clearly, then the film would have probably been more effective in getting what we wanted across.

JOHN: My impression of the showing in San Francisco is that a lot of the very favorable response came because you hold up a lot of stereotypes and show how fucked up they are to people who already knew that those people in the film had fucked up values. In a sense the alienated bourgeoisie, petit bourgeoisie, intellectuals, artists, bohemians can really relate to that. They can get off on mocking people like the school teacher and his $20,000 house and his car. It seems to me that working toward change in a film means challenging people's ideology, really making them think about their values. That's why I asked you why you didn't challenge the people you interviewed. There's a correspondence there, in a sense, between not challenging the people you interviewed and not challenging your audience. That would be my criticism of the film. In some ways the film is even reassuring to alienated intellectuals and many others who have not only questioned some of these values but embarked on some process of overcoming them. I think a lot of us think we have overcome the sexist values to a much greater extent that we really have.

JOSH: That would be again the issue of who you are speaking to. If you are speaking to intellectuals, artists, and students, petit bourgeois, to challenge them is different than challenging the audience that we were trying to relate to. We had a lot of material in the film that was, in different stages of cuts, much more challenging in the sense that we really put down men, saying that you, men are fucking over women, and we took those out because we didn't feel that was a good way to approach these things.

JOHN: As you made the film, what kind of an audience did you visualize you were making it for?

JOSH: We wanted to have "mass" distribution. We wanted to reach as broad an audience as we could reach. We didn't want to make it for radicals. We didn't want to make it for college students; we didn't want to make it for people who were already convinced. We wanted to reach people who had not already thought about the things we were bringing out in the film. We had in mind a high school audience, young working class audience as well as reaching college students.

JOHN: Why?

JOSH: I guess our basic reason for making films is to effect some sort of social change. The purpose of the film is not for someone to

escape into or see an interesting part of life they hadn't seen before, but to stimulate thinking about people changing the society and people changing their personal lives. In a sense the film is a support mechanism. If people see that there are people thinking about these issues and that people are changing, it doesn't make them feel so isolated. Their problems aren't merely personal kinds of problems and the way they live their lives is shared by a lot of other people. The kind of people in the film represent the audience we wanted to reach. That's one of the reasons we didn't go to experts. In a sense we feel that people are experts on their own lives and their own situations. They are best capable of talking about them and talking about them to people like themselves.

This question of audience was our "guiding light"--it always determined decisions in the filmmaking process. New Day was unquestionably a positive force in the back of our minds. People don't just see films in movie theaters: they see and discuss films in classrooms, churches, auditoriums, groups, YWCA's. This is where our audience is. It does have certain limitations. We'd love to get the film into union halls, but they don't use films much as a matter of practice. Of course television reaches a huge audience, but here we're limited to PBS as an outlet. Except for certain places like Boston and New York most people don't watch PBS. *TV Guide*, the largest publication in the country, barely mentions it. Even if the film is seen on TV there's no structure set up for discussion afterwards, a process we've found to be very important for films such as this.

JOHN: What does that say about your original intent to make the film in order to raise consciousness? It seems like that would lead to a question about the very intent of the film, what you are saying now.

JOHN: Well, if you realize that you are working within certain limitations and that you want to say something, you go ahead and say it. If you realize that there are possibilities of getting the film to the kind of audience you really want to get it to, it makes it a lot easier. In our case, we did because we had Jim and Julia there who helped to start New Day Films, which has been very good at getting films out to large broad audiences. We felt positive about getting the film distributed. The whole distribution angle is very important to the process of making a film. To know that you can get the film out to the group you want to reach makes it easier.

RICHARD: A moment ago you talked about making the film within certain limitations. What are they?

JOSH: Well, the limitations of filmmaking and film distribution. Like everything else in America they are businesses controlled by businessmen who are not interested in social upheaval.

RICHARD: How do you go beyond those limitations, as a political filmmaker?

JOSH: Well, a certain amount of it is that, informally, if there are filmmakers, film writers, distributors, and critics who have a similar interest in social change, we will be able to support each other, be able to give each other the kind of financial, ideological interchange that makes it possible to get across what we want to do. The fact that New Day existed, the fact that when we were making the film we saw Odeon Films, Tricontinental, that more and more films like we were making were getting on television, that made it a lot easier for us to do it. We really felt in the back of our heads that it was possible to make a film that would reach people. We think the structures are there to reach people. □

THE OTHER HALF OF THE SKY: A CHINA MEMOIR

Women Hold Up Half the Sky

--Susan Edwards

As a lesbian activist I am concerned with new and positive images of strong women. I wrote the following article on THE OTHER HALF OF THE SKY: A CHINA MEMOIR for Lavender Woman in order to share my enthusiasm about the strength of the Chinese women.

In the article I did not consider the curious downplaying in the film of the role of Claudia Weill and her film crew. This is an irony in a film ostensibly about the increased input and growing expertise of women. The film tends to become "MacLaine's film" rather than a collective effort between MacLaine and the film crew. The struggle of women to work together usefully and lovingly is often easier to portray than to accomplish: this, then, is a fault of an otherwise fine film. We, as American women, need to see something of the filmmaking process--rocky or smooth--that took place between Shirley, Claudia and the film crew.

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From the Great Wall to the fine porcelain, from the crowded port of Hong Kong to the Book of Changes, China has held my imagination. When the communists took over China, the world expected the worst. When Mao killed thousands of non-violent Tibetan monks, those fears seemed realized. But China is emerging as a nation that is committed to the people lowest on the economic scale. Mao, mistakes and all, as the people's hero. Not another Stalin--blood thirsty and crazed with power--but a re-educator.

It took time to understand our country's fear of communism. Our leadership who felt it was vital to make every American believe our life was best, our revolution the most glorious. Almost 200 years later we see that revolution was and still is for white mankind. In a country promising to keep the world free, women are not equal before the law.

So what has Mao done for women? We know China doesn't like lesbians, doesn't want a delegation of us over there. The greatest revolutionary in the world believes lesbianism is the result of decadent capitalism, cannot see the woman love under the political label.

What would Shirley MacLaine see? She went to China to experience and film what Mao's China meant to women, to the American people.

Seven "average" American women accompanied her: a Boston conservative, a Navajo, a psychologist, a Puerto Rican sociologist, a Dallas union worker, a teenager, a black woman from Mississippi who was active in civil rights. Claudia Weill, a feminist filmmaker, two camera women, a sound technician made up the film crew.

The film's objective was to document the changes that Mao has made in the status of women. What you see is not only the Chinese woman but the intense reactions of the American women to a totally different culture.

Totally different because the feminist dream of a roleless culture has become a reality in China. Women are community leaders, have childcare, drive heavy equipment, share housework (although Chinese women feel men are too incompetent to do women's work), are doctors, are political leaders. Women work together rather than competing. Their children learn to love work at an early age. Work is a gift in China. Something that makes you complete. There is no unemployment in China.

Needless to say, the American women were suffering from culture shock. They could not

believe what they saw. Throughout the film you see the American women in various stages of confusion, awe, respect, enthusiasm, sadness, anger, joy.

Even the feminists found it difficult to keep their composure in a society that has no sexual roles. They didn't know how to act without those sexist cues.

The Chinese women do not wear makeup, are assertive and self-assured about their work. All the women we saw knew how to laugh freely and with deep enjoyment.

What struck me and many other women about the Chinese women was that they acted like lesbians. Because they no longer base their behavior on catering to men's sexual fantasies, they seemed free, open, strong, direct and independent. They never took the back seat to men but openly and good naturedly discussed the men's "progress."

The men in China genuinely want women to be equal. They share freely their skills and energy. This came through in the film and perhaps explains why so many American men have attacked this film, attacked Shirley, accused her of propaganda. American men at most admit women want to be equal.

Many of the Chinese women in the film were not married and not too concerned about it. They were seriously developing their own potential, their own work. Marriage is late and although women are expected to have one or two children, work does not stop because there is childcare from infancy. Non-marriage was not an option. The Chinese seemed shocked at the mention of it.

But more than happy children, the non-competitiveness, the absence of male-female roles, you were left with the feeling that there was Hope in China. That this monster we call human nature can be modified. Can be radically altered.

The response of the American women during and after the film was profound. The most powerful response was that of the black woman. She deeply felt the struggle of the Chinese and she said it validated her struggle more than anything else had. She felt the Chinese were showing the world that struggle is glorious, can succeed and result in meeting the needs of the people struggling.

The Navajo woman understood the Chinese struggle to such an extent that she felt she didn't really need to see China for she saw it all in her own people's faith.

The Puerto Rican woman felt that the Chinese had validated her own observations of struggle in her people.

The Boston conservative had become a supporter of women's rights and China.

The only woman who didn't acknowledge her experience was the Dallas union worker. During the film she was enthusiastic and impressed by what she saw but, once home in Dallas, the social pressure must have been too great for her. During the discussion after the film, she mouthed slogans about America and appeared to be totally hard and closed.

We don't want to believe that the human condition can be changed...especially by the "yellow menace." We have been taught that every revolution is a failure except for ours. We do not want to believe that 800 million Chinese people have jobs. That prostitution has been stopped. That booze is not a national health problem. We resist this with all our energy.

Shirley MacLaine said during the discussion of the movie that she feels our country has a vested interest in cynicism. It is to the advantage of the large corporations, the military to keep us in a state of hopelessness, of despair. Many Americans believe there is nothing to be done. We wouldn't know what to do if our leaders were not corrupt, not allies to big business. We believe we must have war in order to have full employment. That money spent on guns is better than money spent on mass transit. We are indeed cynical. We re-elect someone like Mayor Daley because we are afraid of who might take his place--we prefer the known evil.

Shirley MacLaine's film challenges our cynicism. Forces us to realize the depth of our despair and hopelessness. There in China, where individual freedom is not permitted at this point in the process, the people seem happy, healthy, strong, hopeful and full of energy. Here, in America, where individual freedom has become alienation, license to hurt others and has damaged our need for community, we are not happy, hardly healthy, weakened by loss of faith, without much hope and riddled with tensions. The film makes us ask "Do we have to accept this mess?"

Mao changed China through re-education. We call it propaganda, but the film showed us children learning not to compete but to work together; not to hoard possessions but to share them; not to resent another's achievement but to applaud it. In America we are only beginning to admit to the extent illiteracy has spread while the Chinese are reducing the number of characters in their language so that more and more people will learn to read.

This film made me angry...it forced me to see to what extent our country is being corrupted by money, evil use of power and absolute resistance to growth. The Chinese hold out hope to the entire world while our President asks us to accept the liquor dealers, the favorite prostitutes, the wealthy businessmen of Saigon as "refugees." Yet, the Chinese people make a distinction between our leaders and we, the American citizens. This is something that is difficult for Americans because we need and want to have faith in our leaders. We often allow their corruption to become our corruption because we need this faith so much. "Look out for numero uno" is our battle cry. We forget our part in the international struggle against the abuse of power.

Finally, a word about MacLaine. How she travelled across the world with women she hardly knew, how she made a powerful film in spite of the culture shock, how she wrote a book about her experience is a miracle of energy and commitment to me. She and the women who worked with her brought home an important message to Americans, especially women. While they dared not to discuss lesbianism, we saw the free women, the independence, the possibility of a society where women are not the property of men and male fantasy. For this I thank her and the women who braved a new world. □

HUMAN, TOO HUMAN

Wearing your Heart on my Sleeve

--Ruby Rich

> My film is not supposed to be an exposé or a demonstration, but a deliberate look cast upon a work style that exists in the whole world and under all political systems.
>
> It just shows people repeating the same five gestures.

Both quotations originate with Louis Malle. What to make of them, of him and of this newly-released film?

Point of view, as a concept, is usually relegated to high school English classes. However, it becomes so central an issue in Malle's films that a resurrection is demanded. Looking back over his history as a filmmaker, despite his frequent Marxist proclamations, it appears more probable that Malle's ideology is a humanistic romanticism, conveyed through a style and point of view hinged on ambiguity. It is this ambiguity that determines the success or failure of his films, in general winning praise for his fiction films (like LACOMBE, LUCIEN) and criticism for his documentaries.

Louis Malle is most well known for his fiction films, from his early New-Wave-styled love stories to his recent popular incest story, MURMUR OF THE HEART. Less known is his work as a documentarist, from his start in filmmaking as Jacques Cousteau's cameraman for three years, through years of television documentaries on such scenes as Algerian independence and the war in Vietnam (circa 1963), to his coming of age as a documentarist with the splashy Indian opus, PHANTOM INDIA (and its shorter TV companion, CALCUTTA). Asked about the diversity of his career, Malle once stated that he intended to alternate always between fiction and documentary films. In addition to HUMAN, TOO HUMAN, he made another documentary, PLACE DE LA REPUBLIQUE (a series of street portraits), in the same period, between his two successful fiction films: MURMUR OF THE HEART and LACOMBE, LUCIEN. One would assume that a prospering and moneyed commercial film director would insist on such projects, bound to be unpopular and unlucrative, because of strong political convictions--that he had a message to communicate that could not be contained within the bounds of his fictions.

Incredibly, such is not the case. In his narration of the six-hour PHANTOM INDIA, for example, Malle constantly revealed a sincere but naive liberalism that couldn't compensate for his lack of depth and characteristic "tourist" attitude. He applied a French cultural perspective to the Indian situation so that his socialist comments often seemed grafted on to an erroneous view of Indian culture. Perhaps criticism of his narration influenced his decision to omit

any in HUMAN. The problem is still far from solved, however.

Eschewing narration as well as all other dialogue (with the singular exception of the mildly amusing auto-show sequence), Malle has concentrated on a cinema-verite sound-of-the-factory soundtrack, fusing the sound with his images to present a beautiful, stylized view of assembly-line work. But to what end? It's possible to spend the entire film trying to decide whether Malle thinks factory work is alienating or not. He has edited the physical routines on the job into a slick modern dance, the repeated gestures frozen out of their infinite deadening repetition into a glossy sampler of "found" choreography. While momentarily beautiful to look at, the images gradually become more and more disturbing. Malle's weakness has always been a tendency to let the image speak for itself and become incoherent. His mock-heroic opening shot of the woman worker as *deus ex machina* promises satire; his shot of the car body, sinking like a mechanistic Venus de Milo in reverse, promises insight into an automobile as totem object of machine culture; his study of process promises some meaning.

Malle fails to fulfill his promises, constantly opting for a cute portrait, a beautiful movement or--finally--a closing freeze-frame to embody his message. Unfortunately, showing the audience a pretty image does not necessarily supply any meaning. The film remains a Rosetta Stone without code, convenient for us to graft our own interpretations onto but ultimately de-

void of intrinsic integrity. Malle avoids the political issues of factory life by retreating to human faces, to show, yes, these workers are human. Too human. Too human to be doing this work, or too human to be oppressed by it?

On the one hand, audiences have seen Godard's views of the factory as oppressor. On the other hand, visitors to trade fairs and world fairs have seen industrially commissioned films of factories as heaven on earth. In neither case is the viewer likely to believe that the film is strictly documenting the "real" story; both are construed as propaganda. Here Louis Malle has made a film with all the look of an industrial promo spot, based upon a political attitude that condemns exploitation and claiming to be a documentary "look" at factory life.

Now, on the one hand, there is some anti-industry evidence, notably the shocking absence of safety equipment. Welders work with the flimsiest glasses, workers blazing hot metal into car joints work with none at all, spray painters have no masks, workers twining wire on high-speed blades seem to have no guards against amputating fingers and hands. The scene in the locker room, where the men are painstakingly washing their skin, is a reminder of the toxic fallout that they are exposed to daily. But any outrage one might feel is eased by how beautiful everything looks. Nothing in the filming or editing tries to show the harshness behind it.

For his "documentary" flavor, shouldn't Malle have included a few more old people who didn't move as gracefully, a few who are not beautiful or even ugly? Does everyone look happy, content, dignified because they truly are or because the film camera is there? Except for one mechanics sequence, the work place is leisurely. Is this, then, not a piece-work factory? Or are the foremen holding off because of the camera crew and concern for their image? Most puzzling: why does no one speak? For a time it's very nice to see the work, watch the movement, without worrying about language or subtitles. But eventually one comes to miss it, to wonder what these people would be saying if granted a mike. In *Woman's Estate* Juliet Mitchell recounted an experience in a factory asking the women why they worked there:

> Frequent reason is the social company, the chats with other women. I was given this reason by one of the women working in the foundry. I was standing beside her, screaming above the din, my throat sore from a metal dust that was acknowledged to corrode paintwork. "But how can you talk to each other?" "We lip-read."

Malle's cut from the auto show to the factory passes quickly in a close-up; we're several shots into the factory before realizing it. The last line of dialogue. "I'm fed up!" Was that before or after the cut? Well, close inspection shows it was spoken before--the last words recorded at the auto show. But certainly they could have been the only words spoken in the factory. It's ambiguous whether Malle means this joke to be coy or meaningful. In sum, Malle lacks credibility as a documentarist.

HUMAN, TOO HUMAN is a confusing film, alternately illuminating and infuriating, rich and empty. It's main strength must rest not with the film as such but with the information it conveys about Louis Malle. Having seen this work, I find the weaknesses and skills of his other films become more clear. LACOMBE, LUCIEN was praised for its elliptical suspension of judgment; now we see that Malle merely brought his typical ambiguity to bear on the usually clear-cut subject. MURMUR OF THE HEART was praised for its humanism; similarly, illumination. Louis Malle, finally, seems more impressive for his controversial choice of subjects than for distinctions of style. And the unconventional choices he makes are nevertheless not radical: the oddball masks the conservative. Louis, you're an incurable romantic. □

Nashville

Altman's Open Surface

--Jane Feuer

In the opening sequence of NASHVILLE, the camera follows the Replacement Party's truck along a downtown street; a porno theater is in prominent view. A high school girls' drill team greets Barbara Jean at the airport; instead of batons, they are twirling guns. Outside the airport, the camera observes a group of cars pull out of a parking lot in perfect formation. The film is made up of thousands of such tiny observations, and it is this accumulation of detail, rather than the foregrounding of any single incident, that allows critics to say that Altman is making metaphors for America. NASHVILLE has more of a documentary quality than do Altman's earlier films. Gone are many of the stylistic flourishes of the earlier films--the heavily filtered beautifying photography, the turtle-paced zoom shots, the slow motion deaths.

NASHVILLE thus seems to have affinities with the "open" film, the film of revelation in which "reality" unfolds without guidance from the director. Taking many of his examples from the post-war Italian cinema, Andre Bazin valorized this type of film which had no dramatic structure in the usual sense. Perhaps the furthest extreme of the open film occurs in cinema verite, where the drama arises or does not arise out of actual events, filmed in the most unobtrusive way possible. Altman in NASHVILLE keeps his camera at a distance to observe an event, such as the high-angle point of observation of the traffic accident. A couch falls off one car, and we watch as ten other cars collide. It is comedy without comment. Or is it? Characteristically, Altman will choose an environment and let it reveal itself. In THIEVES LIKE US, a mania for Coca Cola and constant radio broadcasts seem to emerge from the milieu itself. One watches the film and thinks, "This is the South, this is the depression." But it is always Altman's view of the South. Altman's casual, on-location filming technique may be related to that of open filmmaking, but only insofar as the revelation of a milieu is part of Altman's style. Details are not merely given, they are selected and patterned. In the traffic accident used as an example above, the scene is commented upon by the British journalist, Opal: "It's America, all those cars crashing into one another." To place this seemingly editorial remark in context, one must understand Opal's role in the film. Throughout the film, she provides the kind of "liberal" commentary that could easily be mistaken for Altman's own point of view. But Opal overdoes it, and her character is made so distasteful that such an interpretation must be qualified. Opal is in the film to prevent the audience from making easy generalizations about the film as a whole.

Altman's images or symbols in NASHVILLE are, as always, naturalized (i.e., seeming to emerge out of the milieu but at the same time, chosen with care). Motor vehicles are one of the

primary symbols of the film. It seems fitting that cars should play a primary role in a contemporary American setting, yet their use in the film is hardly accidental. Altman's expressed intention in NASHVILLE is to show how politics and show business are related. Both are manufactured, like automobiles, and both make a lot of noise and lead to expressions of violence--important themes in Altman's films. When the political slogan--New Roots for America--is projected against the sky on a blimp, the promotional icons of politics and show business are united. Altman's hitherto implicit commentary on the surfaces of American culture becomes explicit in NASHVILLE.

There is a social dimension to Altman's work, and his NASHVILLE does bear some relationship to an actual city in Tennessee. In their outwardly referential, self-conscious dimension, Altman's films can be compared to those of Godard. Both directors make films that are in some sense parodies--they play on the conventions of other films. But Godard is a far more intellectual and political filmmaker than is Altman. Instead of employing a loose narrative, Godard questions narrative itself by constantly breaking into the self-contained world of his fiction with quotations, printed titles, lines of dialog calling attention to the fact that "this is a movie."

Also like Godard, Altman has played very consciously with genre conventions. THE LONG GOODBYE incorporates all of the staples of the detective genre in distorted form, so that we are always aware that we are watching a detective movie. the title song pops up in unexpected places--in a bar, on the car radio of Altman's Jewish gangster. The gateman does imitations of movie stars. Marlowe is interrogated as the police watch through a one-way mirror; Marlowe plays to this mirror, smearing his face with the finger-printing ink. In McCABE AND MRS. MILLER, the standard images of the Western--the raising of the town, the funeral, the shoot-out at the end--are parodied. As Godard has shown, to parody a genre is to comment on it, evaluate it. The funeral scene in McCABE could not exist without the model of "classic" Westerns such as John Ford's THE SEARCHERS. In both films the community clusters around the grave and sings hymns. In the world of Ford's Westerns, the funeral is a ritual that serves to solidify a tightly-knit community, threatened from the outside but internally unified. But in having Mrs. Miller's whores sing the hymns, Altman takes the West off Ford's mythic plane, modernizes it.

Altman's West could never be a Fordian community. No matter what setting he uses, his fictional worlds always resemble the world of contemporary America. Altman has given us not one but many Americas--the gambling world of CALIFORNIA SPLIT, the army camp in M*A*S*H*, space-age Houston in BREWSTER McCLOUD, to name a few. All of these are decadent societies whose stability is threatened. McCabe's mining town is dominated by the whorehouse not the saloon; the strict sanctions of Army life are destroyed by the pranks of the M*A*S*H* heroes; Gould's Marlowe inhabits a Southern California far more time and space bound than the almost indistinguishable underworlds of the genre proper.

The casualness of Altman's dramatic construction parallels these themes of decadence. Without a tightly-constructed plot, we are not cued as to which are the important scenes. In McCABE a tough looking cowboy rides into town, apparently to gun down McCabe, only to wind up cavorting at the whorehouse as the real killer appears.

The other side to this casual flow of events is violence, violence which can erupt at any time and which need not be motivated. The young thug in McCABE shoots Keith Carradine's good natured cowboy; the Jewish gangster mutilates his lover's face; in CALIFORNIA SPLIT Elliot Gould is repeatedly beat up by a fellow gambler; and in NASHVILLE Barbara Jean and Haven Hamilton are shot at a political rally. These moments of incredible violence permeate Altman's films and give the lie to the casual ambiance of their surfaces. The outbursts of violence are foregrounded. McCabe enters into a poker game obscured by a medly of voices, but he dies in slow motion. In THIEVES LIKE US Bowie plays at robbery and murder as if it were the baseball career he might have aspired to in a different environment, but he is gunned to death in a seemingly endless take. In Altman's decaying societies, the casual surfaces and the violent undersides intertwine. They are not opposite poles but rather two complementary manifestations of worlds gone berserk.

In NASHVILLE this counterpoint of complacency and violence is explicitly tied to 1970's politics. It would be possible but misleading to provide a motivation for the murder. A young man comes to Nashville with Hal Phillip Walker campaign literature in the back seat of his car. Pearl indulges in maudlin sentimentalizing of "the Kennedy boys." Opal presents a theory about political assassinations, saying that people who carry guns inspire assassins; Altman cuts to the young man. This young man is shown to have mother problems; he hears Barbara Jean singing about her ma and pa; he shoots Barbara Jean. All of these threads run through the film and can be pieced together, but that misses the point. The assassination is of necessity capricious. Anyone could be the killer and anyone could be the victim in a world where violence runs very close to a surface of complacency. Haven Hamilton's words when he is wounded--this isn't Dallas, it's Nashville--must be taken ironically.

NASHVILLE's dramatic structure appears to be of a more documentary nature than in earlier films because he has abandoned the unifying consciousness of a protagonist. The Altman hero or anti-hero, Marlowe or McCabe or Bowie, existed on the periphery of an established world. We saw that world from his point of view which was never an inside view. In NASHVILLE, this play between outsiders and an established social order is split into multiple consciousnesses but the contrast remains. The outsiders serve as threads that unify and focus. Geraldine Chaplin's obnoxious journalist is one of these. She is the most obvious of the outsiders and becomes a mouthpiece for certain stereotyped views of America. The other prominent outsider is Triplett, the political organizer who courts everyone indiscriminately. He tells the rock singers that they will serve as an antidote to "redneck music," yet he offers Haven Hamilton the governorship of Tennessee.

The earlier Altman hero may well be a romantic, he may aspire to the old virtues of loyalty, romantic love, acts of valor, but these values are impossible in a decadent milieu. Marlowe and McCabe are at once cynical and naive. Marlowe trusts his friend who betrays him. McCabe's smart business dealings boomerang upon him. Acts of heroism seem out of place,-meaningless. McCabe has his grudging revenge in the superimposed snow while Mrs. Miller goes out in the slow zoom of an opium dream. Marlowe dances off to the strains of "Hooray for Hollywood." It's all been just a movie, we are told. There are no heroes in Southern California.

To hinder identification with the characters in NASHVILLE, Altman has made them as distasteful as possible. they are not exactly stick figures but they are not psychologically deep. They lack the ambiguities of Marlowe or McCabe--we never wonder if any of them are heroes. To give these personages psychological depth, to encourage audience identification with them, would run counter to the entire thrust of the film, a portrait of a world in which the individual has become just one more inaudible voice.

The density of image and sound in NASHVILLE is thus no mere technique or trademark. It is rather the culmination of all of Altman's pictures of decadent Americas, Americas he reveals as decaying more from sensory overload than from any political corruption. We are frequently asked to take in very complicated sequences, often shown from an omniscient camera angle. Single shots become sequences and can be infinitely analyzed. In one shot-sequence Barbara Harris, who aspires to be a "country singer or a star" crosses the street. In the background are traffic noises dominated by the blaring of the campaign truck. A car stops to avoid hitting her: this causes a crash with another car. As the victims of the crash yell at one another, a couple of campaign "girls" run up to solicit votes. Such is the density of a relatively short take involving no dialog. Yet it is packed with reverberations. The crashing cars echo the earlier scene on the expressway and emphasize the theatricality of the political campaign (earlier, a campaign "girl" holding a Walker placard had placed herself in front of a TV commentator's camera).

Altman has never been an explicitly political filmmaker; and NASHVILLE is not a "message" film. Rather, Altman is a meticulous observer of the surface symptoms of corruption. McCABE AND MRS. MILLER condemns capitalism at the level of its images: the dope-glazed eyes of Julie Christie and the interminable snow into which the enterprising young McCabe descends and is buried. NASHVILLE gives us the sounds of this corrupt surface: Barbara Harris trying to make her singing debut at an auto race, only to be drowned out by the buzz of cars; Sulene Gray's (Gwen Welles') pathetic singing obscured by shouts and jeers at the smoker; the endless drone of Opal's voice into her tape recorder as she walks through graveyards of automobiles and buses, groping for just the right cliche. The political campaign itself is represented by a truck with a loudspeaker--no one listens to the populist sentiments it emits. Any attempt at personal expression is likely to be obscured by the noise of traffic, blaring radios, overlapping conversations. That is the thematic significance of Altman's sound mix.

Above all the noise stands the music. The music in NASHVILLE is never extraneous, it is primary to a culture which expresses itself in popular songs. Singing is the primary mode of expression in NASHVILLE. It can epitomize a character either in terms of pathos (Sulene Gay's "I Never Get Enough") or of hypocrisy (as when Keith Carradine's Rock Don Juan lures the gospel singer to his bed with the song "I'm Easy"--lyrics of commitment from a young man whose need for women to scrawl "I love you" on his mirror appears to be insatiable). The worlds of country music and politics are mutually reinforcing. In the title sequence, Haven Hamilton is recording a ditty for the bicentennial--"We must be doing something right, to last two hundred years." Of course, all that follows is a direct contradiction of this lyric. The film's final song--"You may say that I ain't free, but it don't worry me"--is a far more appropriate expression of the film's mood. Singing becomes a way of lulling an audience into a celebration of its own complacency. Hal Phillip Walker spouts populist platitudes--he wants to get lawyers out of government and change the national anthem to a tune that everyone can sing. Altman suggests that "It Don't Worry Me" may be that song.

That final song crystallizes what is for me the central dilemma in NASHVILLE. The songs in NASHVILLE may be parodies but they are catchy as hell. Altman seems to be aware of the fact that every audience will interpret his film from its own political point of view. "It Don't Worry Me" continues as the images end, as if Altman wanted the audience to walk out of the theater humming the song. The audience becomes part of the crowd at the Parthenon and, depending on how we have perceived the film, we are either indicted or implicated in its world view. Such, I believe, is the depth of Altman's cynicism, a cynicism that is revealed by Altman's continued attempts to subvert easy liberal interpretations of the film. Altman seems to have taken into account the fact that "200 Years" would become a hit on country radio, that his film would be misunderstood. The drama of NASHVILLE's final sequence does not end when the lights in the theater come up. □

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JUMP CUT Double Summer Issue, part two

Two faces from IN THE YEAR OF THE PIG

Beyond Verité

Emile de Antonio and the New Documentary of the Seventies

--Thomas Waugh

The appearance of a whole series of impressive new documentaries over the last few years--PAINTERS PAINTING, I.F. STONE'S WEEKLY, ATTICA, ANTONIA, and HEARTS AND MINDS are the best known--is a reminder that, with mid-decade suddenly upon us, the American documentary is not only showing remarkable signs of vitality but is also moving purposefully forward through the seventies in its own unique direction. And it is a direction which, for all its diversity, is markedly distinct from the cinema verite impulse which dominated the sixties. Despite the continuing voices of Wiseman, the Maysles and others still using the idiom of a decade ago, there is no doubt that the seventies have already added a new chapter to the history of the American documentary. GIMME SHELTER, now five years old, and even AMERICAN FAMILY, almost three, already seem curiously dated in the shadow of this imposing new chapter.

A general overview of the new films is already long past due; even radical journals, let alone *The New York Times*, have shown a tendency toward a helter-skelter, ad hoc reception of each new film as it appears, rather than a more historical estimation of the new documents as parts of a totality. The Museum of Modern Art's recent retrospective of the films of Emile de Antonio, most recently the director of PAINTERS PAINTING (1972) and the soon-to-be-released film on the Weather Underground, is an occasion to answer this need. De Antonio, long a dissenter from the cinema verite mainstream of the sixties--his first film, POINT OF ORDER, dates from 1963--is confirmed in his seven film retrospective as the pioneer and the foremost practitioner of the new documentary sensibility which has at long last reached the fore. The increasing publicity which surrounds de Antonio's work, his elevation by *Rolling Stone* to the status of radical saint, reinforces the need for a comprehensive evaluation of this filmmaker's career in the cultural, political and theoretical context which formed it.

The original impetus for the cinema verite, as is well known, had been a technological revolution, an upheaval as radical in its own way as the introduction of the talkies had been thirty years earlier. Upon the first introduction of the hand-held cameras and portable recorders in the late fifties, there was a sudden burst on both sides of the Atlantic of nonfiction films celebrating the new accessibility of "truth,"--truth in the surface textures of audio-visual reality, in the immediacy of present time, and in the nuance of spontaneous behavior. Close on the heels of their French and Canadian contemporaries, Richard Leacock and others, grouped around Drew Associates, rushed into the streets with their "camera-stylos" and discovered, as if for the first time, the vitality of "unmediated" existence. They talked of honesty, intimacy, and above all objectivity, as if these old brickbats of aesthetics had been invented along with the Nagra.

This claim to a new privileged grasp of reality, which supplanted the old "subjective" documentary modes of discourse, now appears in retrospect to have been somewhat naive. Leacock and the others were of course right to hate the old newsreel voice-overs which had hammered away at American audiences for generations, each inflection delivering its prepackaged interpretation of the "facts". (Later de Antonio was to derive a brilliant ironic effect from newsreel clips of Nixon's red-baiting days in MILLHOUSE, his analysis of the Nixon phenomenon). Yet the American voice-over with its abuses had not been the only alternative for the classical documentarist. The French had developed a distinguished tradition of the narrated documentary, in which sober and unobtrusive Gallic voice-overs were personal and suggestive rather than pontifical. Alain Resnais, and later Chris Marker, were the most celebrated arbiters of this genre of documentary. Accordingly, the French cinema verite movement (or the cinema-direct as the Gallic manifestation of it is properly called) led by Jean Rouch, used the spoken word as an essential material and structural principle. In fact, the cinema-direct's most radical achievement was as a cinema of sounds. In contrast, the American filmmakers reacted to their heritage of the authoritarian voice-over with an affirmation of the supposed objectivity of the unmediated image, creating a predominantly visual documentary form. Their aesthetic of the image, spontaneous, random, and true, was in effect a gospel of subjectivity, and too often, as it turned out, of inarticulacy as well. The movement's most serious liability was not this subjectivity per se, but its persistent pretense of impartiality.

Most of the films of the era bore highly charged emotional statements beneath their posture of objectivity--uncritical adulation in STRAVINSKY, euphoria in WOODSTOCK, condescension in HAPPY MOTHERS' DAY, contempt in SIXTEEN IN WEBSTER GROVES, contempt in TITICUT FOLLIES.... In fact, contempt was probably the predominant tone of the entire cinema verite movement (probably since contempt is the stance which comes most easily to Eastern liberalism when it interacts with middle America). And contempt is the most visible residue of the cinema verite in a film such as HEARTS AND MINDS in its weakest moments.

If the artifacts of the cinema verite now seem in retrospect to have captured so much of the spirit of their age, it is their embrace of inarticulacy, spontaneity, and entrenched emotionalism--not their aspiration to objectivity--which above all seemed linked to the decade of campus disturbances, ghetto riots, assassinations, and a counterculture based on uncritical iconoclasm. Cinema verite bore the imprint of all the ambiguous romanticism of the Greening of America, its adventurism as well as its fervor.

Emile de Antonio

The challenge to base the new consciousness in concrete change--and the Vietnam war--gave the counterculture its fatal test and provided the cinema verite with a challenge which proved equally fatal. It was a challenge as insurmountable as the Depression had been for twenties avant-gardism two generations earlier. Cinema verite per se had nothing to contribute to the real job that faced the counterculture; it merely reflected and reinforced a mood which in itself was not enough. As the war escalated and escalated, the cinema verite people were preoccupied with rock concerts and easy targets like police-chief conventions and boot-camps, some moving gracelessly into the commercial arena. To be sure, they often provided undeniably profound and touching works of art, but films which failed to meet the increasing need for explicit socio-political analysis to support the momentum of the alternate politics. This failure of Leacock, Wiseman, et al. was a particularly bitter one, because of their widespread

MILLHOUSE

reputation as social critics, and because of the broad-based, potentially activist, liberal audience they addressed. Documentary has a special mystique in the English-speaking world, an aura of social responsibility not shared by the fiction film, which is perhaps its legacy from Grierson. The filmmakers were far more involved in the mystique than in the social issues they dealt with.

Nevertheless, Leacock and his contemporaries had developed an expressive and flexible language which was available for radical social criticism even if they themselves declined to use it in that direction. And three distinct currents of dissident filmmaking did emerge in the Vietnam era, all more or less adapting this language to their own particular goals. The current with the most immediate and diffuse (and no doubt the least radical) impact was based on a series of controversial television documentaries which appeared sporadically during those years, both on PBS and the commercial networks. Here, as might be expected, analytic rigor and conscience were the necessary sacrifice to the medium's huge audience potential. Nevertheless, a number of creditable documentary examinations of domestic social problems appeared from time to time. These effectively continued the intermittent but impressive tradition of conscientious broadcasting initiated by Edward Murrow in his early fifties anti-McCarthy broadcasts. Morton Silverstein's 1967 expose of conditions for southern black migrants on Long Island farms, WHAT HARVEST FOR THE REAPER?, was widely praised as a sequel to Murrow's classic denunciation of the same social evil in his 1960 HARVEST OF SHAME. WHAT HARVEST FOR THE REAPER? relied almost exclusively on cinema verite techniques, although it was structured by voice-over narration (like most television documentaries). A later film by Silverstein, BANKS AND THE POOR (1970), also shown on PBS, is perhaps the most praiseworthy of this category of film during the Nixon era. It is a searing and moving indictment of the victimization of the urban poor by neighborhood banks and lending institutions. Its highlights include a hidden-camera scene in a ghetto loan office in which an unsuspecting loan shark does his pitch for a prospective client, and, most memorably, an interview with a tearful black woman whose house has just been dispossessed through a liability of only a few dollars. The canned rebuttals and denials by bank officials, including David Rockefeller, offer sharp contrast with the authenticity of the verite language as Silverstein uses it: a compelling Brechtian collage effect, the clash of document and actuality, is achieved which is, as we shall see, one of Emile de Antonio's trademarks. A 1968 CBS documentary, HUNGER IN AMERICA, by Martin Carr and Peter Davis, was less successful, clumsy with its interviewing, and more interested in snags in welfare distribution than in the roots of the problem under scrutiny.

Only a few critical assessments of the ongoing war made it to television, understandably. Only rarely did the networks' coverage of the war yield any insight as powerful as Silverstein's domestic analysis had been. The first breakthrough here was a controversial PBS broadcast of a long segment of Felix Greene's INSIDE NORTH VIETNAM (1968), a film CBS had originally planned to show before losing its nerve. This capsule tour of enemy territory also had a limited art house distribution despite federal harassment. More important was Peter Davis's critical look at the Department of Defense in 1971, only obliquely aimed at the war, THE SELLING OF THE PENTAGON. This denunciation of the Pentagon's promotional activities was a masterful blend of the language of cinema verite (watching children play on display bombers, for example) and the traditional TV documentary structures (a voice-over commentary by Roger Mudd, official statements from the Pentagon denying all, etc.). Of course these few successes do not substantially alter the overwhelmingly dismal record of the network news departments during those years. But what else is new?

A second current of dissident documentary during these years was based on efforts by a number of Movement filmmakers, both individual and collective, to compensate for this media void. Few of these had any delusions about their potential for reaching a constituency anywhere as broad as a television audience, or even, for that matter, much broader than the already converted radical community. Impeccable in their directness and uncompromising in their anger, such filmmakers initiated a whole tradition of alternate radical documentary which is still going strong. This tradition's base was the network of radical communities scattered across the urban and campus centers of the country, its continuity often broken and its internal liaison often exceedingly fragile. This tradition tended to emphasize depth of impact rather than breadth, and for a while screening-discussions were the pattern, until co-ordination problems proved too much.

In the early days, this movement's chief impetus came from the New York and San Francisco chapters of Newsreel, an organization whose precredits machine-gun logos is still the most recognizable symbol of this whole tradition. Newsreel's strategy of polarization and confrontation differed sharply from both the networks' stance of socially conscious journalism and de Antonio's emphasis on analysis. Such spokespeople as New York's Robert Kramer (before he turned to fiction) rejected analysis as a goal entirely, championing instead the notion of film as a weapon. The commitment towards analysis was an "illusion", as was the possibility of real dissent or of real understanding of the issues.[1] The early Newsreel film-weapons were often criticized by radicals for an "ultra-left disdain for quality (the larger the grain, the better the politics)."[2] In other words, the potential weaknesses of the cinema verite language used indiscriminantly infected many of the films, and not only in terms of production values: thematic confusion, egotism, and ideological contradictions were rampant. Nevertheless, a number of competent, articulate films did come to be produced on both coasts and enjoyed a surprisingly large distribution on what was in the late sixties a burgeoning radical circuit. Such titles as GARBAGE, CHICAGO, BOSTON DRAFT RESISTANCE GROUP, and MEAT CO-OPERATIVE stood out above the early glut of films during the first Nixon years. As the output of films slackened somewhat, they seemingly improved, and it is from this middle period that the movement's best films emerged: PEOPLE'S WAR (1969), another Vietnam-behind-the-lines film (an important documentary sub-genre until quite recently, with its own special problems arising from varying degrees of Vietnamese official "co-authorship"); BLACK PANTHER and THE WOMAN'S FILM, two of the San Francisco products, dealing with the radical black problematic and the organization of working-class women respectively, both relying heavily on cinema verite and interview techniques, and representing the peak of Newsreel achievement both in terms of artistic impact and distribution range; RICHMOND OIL STRIKE, a 1970 chronicle of a California strike by white workers which has a special place in the Newsreel oeuvre for its stunning revelation of incipient revolutionary consciousness among white union members and their wives. With these latter two films, the Newsreel crews for once started to listen, and tapped what has become the alternative cinema's richest resource, the voices and consciousness of its working-class constituency. Such recent films as Julia Reichert's and Jim Klein's METHADONE: AN AMERICAN WAY OF DEALING brilliantly demonstrate the flexibility and power of this resource.

Other Movement filmmakers, unaffiliated with Newsreel, were also notable. From Chicago, for example, came Howard Alk's and Mike Gray's THE MURDER OF FRED HAMPTON and the former's AMERICAN REVOLUTION TWO, both widely distributed and powerful documents heavily dependent on cinema verite language. The former in particular had a large audience and was highly praised despite its susceptibility to the rhetorical excesses of verite. Much of its impact was due no doubt to the drama of the event it described (a frequent tendency of Newsreel films as well), in this case Hampton's assassination which occurred halfway through the shooting of a proposed film on the Chicago Panthers. The result is a film on his death, half eulogistic, half journalistic; its most interesting feature is its de Antonio-style interplay of Chicago police Newspeak and its own verite investigation of the evidence. Its ultimate effect, however, is undercut by the artists' overly sentimental approach to the subject (long indulgent closeups of bereaved Panther women), a frequent liability of white filmmakers when dealing with minority agitation, or "other people's struggles" as one Movement veteran puts it.[3] In recent years this liability has been increasingly overcome by radical documentarists by either concentrating on struggles closer to home, or by creating films about minority struggles which have genuine roots in the consciousness of their subjects.

Despite the continuing prolificacy of this alternative tradition, as evidenced by such strong recent films as WINTER SOLDIERS, FINALLY GOT THE NEWS, the methadone film, and the work of the Pacific Street Collective (FRAMEUP: THE IMPRISONMENT OF MARTIN SOSTRE), this current has always been plagued by serious distribution problems, both theoretical and actual. Most radical filmmakers of this orientation have always relied on existing Movement structures to exhibit and distribute their work and the overall result has been neither efficient, systematic, nor continuous. Inevitably the old problematic of preaching to the converted has reasserted itself--the films by and large never reached a public beyond the circuit of the radical subculture, despite such attempts as Newsreel's experiments with street projections in ghetto neighborhoods, etc.; and the weakening of that circuit in the seventies was disastrous, though far from fatal, for alternative filmmaking. Nevertheless, the role of this current in stimulating and strengthening the Movement that has persisted over the years has been immeasurable and a worthy achievement in itself.

The third current of dissident documentary, what I have already referred to as the new documentary of the seventies, richly heterogeneous but epitomized by Emile de Antonio, avoids the pitfalls both of network compromise and the isolation of the radical circuit. Admittedly, its audience is not composed of workers, rightly a priority for radical filmmakers, or the minority communities that Newsreel tried to reach. Its constituency includes the radical subculture, but extends far beyond it to a wider base which often assures it a commercial viability (insofar as documentaries can ever be commercial) and a certain degree of independence as well. Speaking directly to the urban, liberal or intellectual middle class, it is able to retain much of its integrity as hard-nosed social enquiry. It is based on both the recognition of where the power really lies, and on the premise of the importance of the struggle on the theoretical front as well as on the barricades, in the realm of the liberal consciousness as well as in ghetto neighborhoods, and of the macrocosmic perspective as well as the microcosmic. Filmmakers with this inspiration, occasionally casual or vague about their target audience and usually middle-class intellectuals themselves, find a constituency of their peers and address themselves to the task of challenging the ideological foundation of that group. Most often such films rely on financing by wealthy liberals and on theatrical distribution in the urban and campus centers; some occasionally make it to the airwaves as well. Such filmmakers are hesitant to offer solutions--their contribution is often based on their ability to pose the correct questions, to penetrate and unsettle the liberal equilibrium. Contradictions are many--but ultimately radical discourse is extended to a broader base, and significantly enriched.

Emile de Antonio has set the pattern for the new documentary, and embodies its inspiration and its contradictions, more than any other. As one encounters him presiding over his New York office-studio, one is struck by the incongruity of a battle taken up against the whole U.S. establishment by this congenial man with enormous energy, roving conversation, and a robust sense of outrage. A laureate of the Enemies List? As he looks out over Union Square he points to both the pinkness of the late afternoon sky and the spot where the hugh Communist marches gathered during the thirties. He wryly recalls his participation in those marches, a leader of a contingent from Harvard (the beginning of decades of FBI surveillance of his career, as he discovered recently, thanks to the Freedom of Information Act). As he braces himself for his forthcoming lawsuit against the FBI and the CIA (invasion of privacy), an outcome of the much-publicized grand jury challenge to the new Weather Underground film, one senses the exhausting emotional investment of the man in his art and in his struggle to continue asking his own unique kind of questions. Yet for all his dedication to social change, and his con-

tinuously professed allegiance to Marxism, there seems a curious isolation on his part from the mainstream of both the Left and contemporary radical film culture. There is the suggestion that his now famous fascination with the Weather People stems partly from an affinity with them--an embattled obstinacy, a romantic bravado, a fierce self-dependence. As he lists the stages in his career--his years at prep school and Harvard, his service in the War, his shortlived teaching stint (English and Philosophy at William and Mary), his aimless drift through the fifties engaging in short-term business operations and hovering on the periphery of the New York avant-garde (he points out Andy Warhol's headquarters across the street and recalls his support for Warhol at the beginning of the artist's career), his sudden, almost accidental emergence as a filmmaker--he constantly alludes to the irony that he should have made his first film when already "middle-aged", as he puts it, and that his political development should have most recently taken the course of support for a famous group of underground revolutionaries while already advancing through his fifties. The overall impression is one of deadly seriousness and moral fervor, and in this, his role in the perpetuation of past traditions of documentary conscience, his place in the continuum of causes, ideals, and outcries that is his legacy as a documentarist, is a clear one.

The new documentary of the seventies, then, finds its roots in this man's response to the political climate of the sixties. Like the filmmakers of the dissident television tradition and of the radical underground, de Antonio assimilated where necessary the strategies and aesthetics of the verite mainstream which dominated the decade, but adapted them to the serious and modest form suitable to his moral, didactic purposes. This form, refusing the resources of both declamatory rhetoric and self-indulgent aestheticism, expanded the documentary's potential as a medium of genuine political interrogation. The pseudo-objective cinema verite of the sixties was ultimately bypassed by this cinema of open commitment, research, and analysis. The new American documentary recognized the camera's unavoidable subjectivity and harnessed it in the service of a conscious political orientation from the start. This seriousness, this modesty, and this commitment enabled this current to withstand the traps of commercial co-optation and political desublimation which WOODSTOCK and its progeny so vividly epitomized.

Emile de Antonio, then, was hardly an eager young camera wizard like the cinema verite people when he made his first film, POINT OF ORDER, in 1963. It is significant that this first gesture of resistance to the formal and ideological orthodoxy of verite was made by a middle-aged, ex-academic culture hobo who had never touched a camera; for the new documentary was not set off by a technological revolution as the cinema verite had been. Its roots were more in a modulation of sensibility. This shift from cinema verite to the new committed documentary echoed a similar transition forty years earlier, in which the first euphoric documentaries of the twenties were replaced by those strikingly subdued products of the thirties and forties. Despite the intervening introduction of sound technology, which of course had some thematic ramifications, it was not primarily technical refinement which distinguished the typical documentaries of the twenties--the avant-garde manifestos of Ivens, Ruttman, Cavalcanti, and Vertov, not to mention the Flahertian travelogues--from the restrained, earnest films of the next two decades--the sober products of the American New Deal and war effort, of the Grierson bodies in Britain and Canada, and of the Soviet First Five-Year Plan and after. Both transitions (1930 and 1970 being only schematic approximations of their dates) were characterized by a reassessment of the previous era's technical revolution, by a movement from "formlessness" to "form," from poesis to thesis, from the celebration of surfaces to the probing of meanings, from the ecstatic experimentation with new resources to their consolidation in the services of specific analysis, questions, and statements. Both the thirties and the seventies represent a period of technological stasis in the field of the documentary, a pause for the arsenal of the non-fiction filmmaker to be tested, expanded, and applied to new aesthetic and political problems, not remodeled.

POINT OF ORDER, de Antonio's first film, appeared in 1963, the same year as the release of Leacock's HAPPY MOTHERS' DAY, well before the zenith of the cinema verite movement, and yet it deserves to be seen as an early reaction to that movement. In fact, side by side, POINT OF ORDER and HAPPY MOTHERS' DAY offers a strikingly clear paradigm of the twofold direction open to documentarists in the decade or so to follow. Leacock's film, an often snide exploration of a South Dakota town's materialistic response to the local birth of quintuplets, represents the path almost unanimously taken during the sixties. De Antonio's film, rejected by the New York Film Festival because it was not a film, is an examination of the phenomenon of McCarthyism, through a compilation of original video footage of the Army-McCarthy hearings of ten years earlier. It sketches the contours of a less crowded route.

The contrast between these two directions is fundamental: the Leacock film, pure poesis, a cinema of great intimacy yet of almost baroque stylization, at once a celebration of the present and an implied elegy for a mythological past...the de Antonio work, pure analysis, a cinema that is both public and visually austere,

POINT OF ORDER

the documents of the past explored for their lessons for the present. HAPPY MOTHERS' DAY expresses its eloquent despair in the lyrical-populist Flahertian tradition: it sees the ultimate betrayal of the American ideal in ordinary townspeople, but rejoices in the equanimity and grace of the babies' mother. De Antonio localizes the object of his despair at the very seat of power, in the Eisensteinian manner: he presents McCarthy, his cronies, and the ineffectual politicians he confronts (not to mention the clever lawyers on both sides) as the personifications of a corrupt and oppressive system, just as his Soviet predecessor saw the Tsarist officers, the ineffectual Kerensky, and the fat kulaks and priests as embodiments of reaction.

The divergence between these two directions is essentially one which is already well explored in this century's artforms: collage vs. improvisation. De Antonio's basic technique is "the use of a collage of people, voices, images, ideas, to develop a story line or a didactic line, uninterrupted by external narration."[4] He compresses and analyzes an event, assembling and juxtaposing fragments of it. POINT OF ORDER represents this technique in its purest, most rudimentary form, since the act of assemblage and editing is the artist's only original contribution to the raw material. In contrast, Leacock extends and elaborates an event by intuitively circling about it, accumulating a wealth of random detail into a decoratively mythologized whole. The opposition suggested by these two approaches implies among other things the irreconcilability of mythological thought and analytic thought, of the Costa-Gavras and the Godards, of neo-mythologization and de-mythologization. For the radical filmmaker the implications are important. It is, of course, not surprising that it should have been the neo-mythologists who dominated the mainstream political cinema in the early and mid-sixties. It is a tragedy archetypally American that the Newspeak newsreel voice-over should have been replaced by a mythologization all the more insidious, the fetishization of the image by a sensibility of alienated, individualist Romanticism.

Television has naturally had a crucial influence on the work of both Leacock and de Antonio; and the opposition between the 1963 works of the two men demonstrates the distinctly different mode of this influence on each. Leacock was, as we have seen, one of the first to develop an integrated aesthetics from the new hardware of the late fifties, but the importance of television both in providing the economic stimulus for its development and the forum for the public assimilation of the new idiom it entailed, cannot be over-emphasized. HAPPY MOTHERS' DAY was in fact originally commissioned by ABC (and then drastically re-edited for the version that was finally broadcast); and the film is notable for its reliance on a filmic syntax made accessible by television, its assumption of its audience's tele-visual literacy. Although the Leacock version of the film is undeniably more piquant than the re-edited ABC one, it is nevertheless disturbingly guilty of the increasing tendency of television to "massage" its audience under the innocent guise of objectivity.

In contrast, though POINT OF ORDER is composed entirely of period television footage of the Army-McCarthy hearings, compressed in a ratio of 100 to one, the result is an incisive critique of the video medium itself, a documentary parallel of Elia Kazan's A FACE IN THE CROWD, the 1957 Hollywood denunciation of the power of the tube. POINT OF ORDER's impact as auto-critique is stronger because of its documentary authenticity. The alienating effect of seeing video on the cinema screen, and the further effect of the ten-year lapse between shooting and compilation, give the film all the more analytic power. The object of analysis becomes not only the web of personality and issue involved in the historic Alice-in-Wonderland debate, but the medium itself and its power to lend dignity and legitimacy to scoundrels and demagogues, and authority and inertia to the status quo. As de Antonio has often said, the two video cameras are the heroes of the film: visual rhetoric wields more weight than logic, and videogenic physiognomy and witty rejoinder have more force than conviction. Of course the televised Senate hearings were not the first manifestation of the video politics to come: with MILLHOUSE, and the later separate release of the Nixon 1952 Checkers Speech segment of it, de Antonio was to trace its birth back even further. If the cinema has long had a clearly articulated tradition of auto-critique, of meta-cinema, ranging from MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA to GAI SAVOIR, POINT OF ORDER signified the coming of age of television with the now richly demonstrated possibility of the mode of meta-video.

At the same time, POINT OF ORDER was also an early revelation of the crucial potential of video as a tool of primary historical investigation. Period video footage now becomes an audio-visual historical record with the unassailable authority formerly held only by vintage newsreels (with the same inherent dangers of course, given video's even greater need for editing--de Antonio himself once commented that he could have made McCarthy come out looking good). This authority is partly due to the naive, functional, purely denotative orientation of the original recording. Video's low density would seem also to minimize film's emphasis of random nuances, while it captures all of the rich fabric of audio-visual inflection and detail which written history omits. Ironically, the transfer of video from the television screen to the movie screen somehow serves to absolve it of whatever lack of credibility infects it in its original, functional context. It attains purity as a document.

In this light de Antonio appears the descendant of the first generation of Soviet cine-historians, Esther Shub and others, who had a comparable sense of the primary role of the film document as a raw material of historical research. Dziga Vertov's use of the cine-document was also highly skilled and all too rarely exercised, only in STRIDE, SOVIET! and THREE SONGS OF LENIN among his mature works. Vertov's use of newsreel footage in these films has a somewhat different orientation than Shub's or de Antonio's, more towards the modes of rhetoric and mythography than historiography proper. Nevertheless the basic maieutic rhythm arising from the conjunction of document and actuality in these films certainly anticipates de Antonio's essential strategy more than Shub's basically archival interest.

In any case, de Antonio's use of video documents, with their own freshness and impact, is his own unique contribution. Since video is a major component of the present cultural and ideological fabric of American society, it becomes, with POINT OF ORDER, an indispensable resource for radical documentarists of both socio-political and historiographical intent.

Thus, while the cinema verite movement and HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY celebrated the present, POINT OF ORDER legitimized the past as an equally rich field of documentary exploration for Americans. History ceased to mean for the filmmaker either a visual illustration of conventional historiography, such as CBS's TWENTIETH CENTURY and a host of other voice-overed, popularized historical films had been, or a pretext for heroic mythologization as in the Spanish Civil War subgenre represented by TO DIE IN MADRID (a worthy exercise in itself, as a prod to civilization's fading conscience, but hardly a tool of new historical investigation). Instead, the documentary became a genuine instrument of historiography, a medium for diachronic social analysis with its own validity and authority, relying on visual documents in the same way that the traditional writing of history relied on written documents. (Of course, an irony is to be savored

NIXON'S CHECKERS SPEECH

in the use of a medium, based technically on the ephemerality of the instant, as an instrument for grasping the meaning of the past). The discovery of this potential of film and video is no doubt parallel to the changing conception of the task of history, the new emphasis, for example, on the use of oral history, and, oddly enough, of statistical analysis as well. As might be expected, Americans followed other groups as diverse as the Parisian Left Bank and the National Film Board in their discovery of the cinema as a medium of historical analysis, though it is to their credit that they discovered video as an indispensable resource in this pursuit and have used it most successfully since. And it is no doubt video's integral auditory component, incidentally, that makes it such a valuable resource--the new documentary's revolt against the tyranny of the image was implicit in de Antonio's turn to video as the material of his first film.

As it stands, POINT OF ORDER is still de Antonio's only film to have been televized nationally in the U.S., although there is now talk of broadcasting one or two of the others and virtually all of them have appeared on TV in most other Western countries. When it appeared, POINT OF ORDER was the most controversial and critically acclaimed documentary in years (it also provoked the most hate mail) and remains today one of the most commercially successful and widely distributed of his films. Financed, as was to be the pattern, with "liberal money", and produced by New Yorker Films' Daniel Talbot, it reached a theatrical audience unheard-of for post-war documentaries (thanks in no small way to a $100,000 distribution campaign financed by Walter Reade, another unheard-of feature of the film). It is no mean feat for a documentarist to reach such a constituency, to introduce the possibility of radical discourse to the deeply prejudiced and powerful, middle-class liberal audience, with its entrenched fear of Stalinist propaganda, as de Antonio can be said to have done with that first film. It is a goal on which de Antonio staked his subsequent career, and one which Newsreel has never even to entertain.

The simple factor which most ensures de Antonio's accessibility to the "unconverted" middle-brow or intellectual audience is his respect for the integrity of the document. He retains his audience's trusts by refusing to superimpose an external explanation or commentary upon his evidence. The documents speak for themselves. His didacticism, in POINT OF ORDER, as well as in his other films, is democratic in a real sense. The viewer must actively meet the challenge posed by a document rather than submit to an exegesis dictated in the authoritarian manner of Louis de Rochemont, Roman Karmen, or Walter Cronkite. As de Antonio himself explained:

> I'm usually attacked for not jumping on McCarthy hard enough, or not explaining certain events with a voice-over narration. I've always thought that it's wrong to explain things to audiences. The material is there, and interpretations can be made. I mean I could have stopped the film and inserted outside explanations, but I'm really not terribly interested in that. I disagree with that approach from every point of view aesthetically and even politically. I think it's a mistake to show everything. And I think this is what is most wrong with so-called didactic films, that they become so utterly didactic that they forget that a film is also a film.[5]

Nevertheless, in a later interview about his Vietnam film, he expands a notion of "democratic didacticism" which is crucial to his work, for all its anachronistic Griersonian ring:

> ....I have been a teacher. My work is didactic....I only want to think that this film on Vietnam is more complicated, has more levels of meaning than there are in a slogan or in a purely didactic message. I don't believe that such a message has any more sense than to shout in the street "Down with war!" If you do so, that doesn't mean anything. The goal of a truly didactic work is to go beyond that and to suggest the "why". I like to describe my own feelings as democratic with a small "d", which means that if you don't want to teach things to people but to reveal things to them, you will permit them then to arrive at the same conclusion as yourself. That's a democratic didacticism, without having to say "firstly, secondly, thirdly." And that's why I insist on the word "reveal." A young American sees the film, and he doesn't hear de Antonio addressing him, but he can himself come to a conclusion about the war...[6]

Grierson is thus not the only ghost conjured up by this fervent ideal--the echoes of Eisenstein as well, in particular his famous invocation of Marx in *Film Sense*, are too striking to pass over and too obvious to elaborate:

> The spectator is compelled to proceed along that selfsame path that the author traveled in creating the image. The spectator not only sees the represented elements of the finished work, but also experiences the dynamic process of the emergence and assembly of the image just as it was experienced by the author. And this is, obviously, the highest possible degree of approximation to transmitting visually the author's perceptions and intention in all their fullness, to transmitting them with "that strength of physical palpability" with which they arose before the author in his creative work and his creative vision.
>
> Relevant to this part of the discussion is Marx's definition of the course of genuine investigation: "Not only the results, but the road to it also is a part of truth. The investigation of truth must itself be true, true investigation is unfolded truth, the disjuncted members of which unite in the result." The strength of the method resides also in the circumstance that the spectator is drawn into a creative act in which his individuality is not subordinated to the author's individuality, but is opened up throughout the process of fusion with the author's intention...[7]

Of course the question can arise whether de Antonio's appeal to a broad-based liberal audience is consistent with the Marxist principles he professes. It is a question not easily resolved. Is his divergence from the reformist ideology of the sixties more a theoretical one than an actual one, his analytic methodology merely a style based on a theoretically constructed model of an ideal spectator who doesn't actually exist? Does de Antonio's recent interest in the Weather People mean that his earlier faith in "democratic didacticism" has been revised? He claims not, yet the contradictions persist. They present themselves sharply indeed in de Antonio's next film after POINT OF ORDER, THAT'S WHERE THE ACTION IS, a fifty-minute BBC television assignment dealing with the 1965 New York mayoral race between John Lindsay, Abraham Beame and William Buckley. The artist's first experience with a camera crew and his first encounter with an ongoing event, the result is his most journalistic film. It is also most remote from the acerbic tone of the "radical scavenging" for which he was to become famous, and the least inclined to escape form the confines of the bourgeois problematic within which it is posed. Compared to the other films, it has, predictably, the impersonal air of an assignment about it, but it is executed with skill and verve nonetheless.

The film interpolates a British perspective of an American election (a BBC voice-over introducing parties, candidates and issues, was probably unavoidable) with a running discussion of the urban problems which were the issues of the campaign. The vivid melange of verite footage of campaign activity, and interviews with both voters and candidates, lay and professinal commentators, is flawlessly assembled. The most impressive aspect of the film is its continuation of the theme of media-critique begun with POINT OF ORDER. De Antonio wittily undercuts the electoral system by including television spots by both major candidates, complete with unabashedly empty rhetoric and tasteless campaign songs (by Ethel Merman in the Lindsay spot). There is also prolonged scrutiny of the candidates' platform demagoguery and a caustic critique of the Lindsay style by also-ran Conservative Buckley. One the whole, THAT'S WHERE THE ACTION IS (it's the BBC's title, not his own) is a modest and promising second film: however, it fails to heighten the satirical bemusement in its view of electoral politics to any serious level of interrogation, and furthermore, seems content with the classical sixties-liberal problematic of urban decay in its treatment of big-city problems (relying heavily on Daniel Moynihan for its commentary in this area). And ultimately the film's analysis of video politics is itself weakened by its own susceptibility to the charismatic attraction of candidate Lindsay. The photogenic, aristocratic liberal emerges relatively unscathed from the film, seeming to get the better share of the camera's attention (at one point he offers it a gigantic close-up hot dog). And in the long run he succeeds in charming the film's audience, despite the director's attempts to undercut his appeal, as much as he charmed most American liberals that year (as well as the majority of the voters).

However, if the film is unquestioningly a minor work, it constitutes an important step in the artist's career. If POINT OF ORDER served as a manifesto of general aesthetic principle (democratic didacticism) and strategy (collage), expressed in their most basic form, THAT'S WHERE THE ACTION IS and de Antonio's subsequent film, RUSH TO JUDGMENT (1966), point clearly to the complex form of cinema, the "document-dossier", which the four following "mature" works were to imitate and refine: IN THE YEAR OF THE PIG (1969), a discussion of American involvement in Vietnam; AMERICA IS HARD TO SEE (1970), an analysis of the Eugene McCarthy presidential campaign of 1968; MILLHOUSE (1971), a satirical portrait of Richard Nixon; and PAINTERS PAINTING (1973) a historical survey of contemporary American (New York) painting.

In RUSH TO JUDGMENT, de Antonio confirms the interview, that basic artifact of television culture (and the basic ingredient of the television film which he had just completed), as an integral element of his characteristic form of collage. The interview had been totally suppressed by Leacock and his colleagues but had always been a standard component of the European and Canadian cinema-direct (not to mention the films of Godard). Despite the interview experiments in such early sound documentaries as Esther Shub's KOMSOMOL: LEADERS OF ELECTRIFICATION (1932), Vertov's THREE SONGS OF LENIN (1933) and Grierson's HOUSING PROBLEMS (1936), and occasional reliance on it in the theatrical newsreel medium, it was only with the coming of television that this technique had been perfected as a staple of audio-visual language. By the time de Antonio took it up, it had already been totally absorbed by his video-generation audience. Low-key and non-emphatic, the interview is essential to the functional orientation of his work. His art is an art of revelation, not astonishment, and "content," not style. His emphasis on "content" is the basis for his nostalgic admiration for the pre-television documentaries of the thirties (particularly those of Paul Strand) and his scorn for his cinema verite contemporaries:

> Why did I make POINT OF ORDER? I wanted to make documentaries: the only documentaries I like had been made before World War II. Television and the Cold War had taken the content out of documentary...[8]
>
> The audio-visual history of our time is the television out-take. Each hour, cameras, as impersonal as astronauts, grind away film and tape which the content-free networks will never transmit. Our television is content-free not because it is regulated but because it is a commodity--not news or art or entertainment but a product...[9]
>
> Dependence on the technical is also an aspect of no content. Cinema-verite? Whose verite? No one can fault the development of fast, light, mobile equipment. What is wrong is the space the best known practitioners of cinema-verite occupy today: publicity films for rock groups.[10]

De Antonio relies on the interview, not only as a means of personal revelation (as with the cinema-direct), but also, more importantly, as a medium of "content," in defiance of television's relegation of the interview to its most pedestrian, digestible, reliably content-free ingredient. The use of this traditionally innocuous device for historical analysis, personal reminiscence, or professional (or lay) opinion made such content fresh and accessible for an audience unaccustomed to finding such weighty matter therein. It becomes emphatic by virtue of its flatness. The long, static interview shots in RUSH TO JUDGMENT and the later films force their content upon the spectator because of their visual austerity. De Antonio's film language is more sedate, more prosaic, as it were, and much cheaper--ultimately much more relevant to the double ideals of democracy and didacticism, than the flamboyant, poetic language of the cinema verite. And this visual language is by no accident an affirmation of the vital role of speech, of dialogue, of logic, in radical discourse.

The interview is also integral to de Antonio's historical perspective. The fundamental rhythm of his mature films is a systole-diastole between the document, a fragment from a past event, and the interview, a living segment of a present reflecting upon and analyzing that fragment. It is the basic Brechtian (and Sophoclean) structure of action in alternation with analysis. RUSH TO JUDGMENT, de Antonio was proud to claim, was the first American film that "went into really big interviewing" and his retrospective defensiveness about its "boringness" is not at all warranted. Just as THAT'S WHERE THE ACTION IS had juxtaposed documents (visual and auditory) from an event, with commentary from observers of and participants in that event, RUSH TO JUDGMENT assembled film and video material from the Dallas assassination and the investigation that followed it, with interviews with spectators of the events. The ultimate effect is a denunciation of the Warren Commission's (deliberate?) shortsightedness. De Antonio's collaboration with Mark Lane on the project, the author of the investigative book by the same title, is perhaps responsible for the only major flaw in this otherwise compelling film: there is an overall tendency to sensationalize rather than analyze the evidence that the film gradually accumulates in the defense of the scapegoat Oswald, and in addition, a rather explicit, almost homiletic tone due to the awkward appearances of Lane himself, who tends to belabor the points that have already been driven home by the documentary evidence and testimonies of witnesses.

RUSH TO JUDGMENT's most interesting feature

is its continuation of the previous film's excursion into the populist arena which is more normally considered the domain of Leacock, et al. Seen in the context of de Antonio's oeuvre, these two films and the later treatment of Eugene McCarthy's presidential campaign, AMERICA IS HARD TO SEE, reveal a grass roots sensibility that is ultimately secondary within his vision of American society; these three films contain what might be called a digression from the more central preoccupation of the artist's career, that is, the American tragedy as seen in the roles of its chief protagonists, not its chorus (or its victims).

RUSH TO JUDGMENT, filmed only on the brink of the age of fashionable dissent, and far from the Eastern enclaves of radical chic, was also de Antonio's most dangerous film to produce until the Weather Underground film. For one thing, his customary rich liberal investors were nervous about such a touchy subject and the film had to be financed by British sympathizers such as Tony Richardson and John Osborne. Realized with an amateur crew, terrorized while in production by local and federal police, and hampered by official hostility, the film provoked de Antonio's first real taste of the harassment that was to dog him for the rest of his career. Distribution was also a problem--theater owners were threatened with vandalism and the release date coincided with the outbreak of the Six Days War, which provided serious competition on the small screen. As a result, it was de Antonio's least widely distributed film. Recently, however, there has been renewed interest in it and there is even talk of it being broadcast on PBS.

Remarkable then for its very existence, RUSH TO JUDGMENT is all the more impressive as an exploration of a popular response to bewildering political events:

> What I wanted to show, at great length, was that one guy could take on the FBI--or two of us really, Mark Lane and I--and the Warren Report, and prove that they had lied, by filming people at great length describing events that had happened in Texas in November of 1963. I felt that the Warren Commission's investigations or really lack of them, was outrageous, so I went down and filmed these witnesses. I like the idea of their slow Texas speech while telling a story--just ordinary working people, not Marxists or anything, just guys who worked for the railroad or whatever--and I didn't give a damn if people were bored by it or not. I liked it.[11]

De Antonio thus hits upon a basic principle of the French and Canadian cinema-direct: not only can non-participant, non-expert subjects offer profound, illuminating discussions of the social forces which affect their lives, but their testimonies alone, by virtue of their very existence, can themselves in the specific socio-political context of their lives constitute the basis of a moving and provocative aesthetic/political experience. This insight was later the basis for Newsreel's most solid achievements, as we have already seen, in such films as THE WOMAN'S FILM and RICHMOND OIL STRIKE. It is certainly telling to compare the dignity of the witnesses in RUSH TO JUDGMENT, pictured in their unassuming livingrooms (doilies in place), or in the open spaces of the assassination sight, with the shallow, condescending portraits of ordinary Americans one encounters in the films of Leacock, Wiseman, or Barron. Unhappily, de Antonio seldom returns to build on this talent he shows in RUSH TO JUDGMENT, or to confirm the populist sensibility which is too often lacking in the consciousness of the New Left.

De Antonio's art is always highly evocative visually; he can extract as much visual power from a static closeup interview as exists in a Godard monologue or in a Pasolini closeup of a wrinkled extra. Nevertheless, the ultimate impact of his art is fundamentally aural. If the American verite filmmakers banished the soundtrack to a minor role (despite their delight in noise), the reverse is true of de Antonio. His films are essentially sound films, or more specifically, films of verbal language and dialogue. As with television journalism, the dominant logic of the de Antonio film is verbal and the image often functions simply as a contrapuntal accompaniment to the primary current of the film, its voices--voices arising out of the documents from the past, and voices from the present, echoing, interpreting, mocking, judging, analyzing, exorcising them. The voices of the interviewees regularly leave the image of the present and accompany the documents as they unfold, so that the past-present, document-actuality opposition becomes not only sequential but simultaneous. With THAT'S WHERE THE ACTION IS and RUSH TO JUDGMENT, the voice-over, banished by the cinema verite as a vestige of a tyrannical past is reclaimed and liberated. No longer the voice-over of TWENTIETH CENTURY and THE MARCH OF TIME, it is the voice of a witness participating in a discourse extracting the meaning hidden by the image, bringing the reflection and the perhaps greater wisdom of the present to bear on the inscrutability of time past as it unrolls once again.

The word becomes the basic strucutral and organizational principle of the film:

> Words are very important in my film (THE YEAR OF THE PIG) and in all of my work, and that's how I do the editing: I start with the transcription of the sound-track and put all of these pages up on the walls of the big editing rooms where I work and begin to assemble the papers before the film: that's how the structure begins; then I take the film, and I go endlessly from the text to the film and from the film to the text, and I change them around, switching the sheets of paper with each other. I have a good visual memory. When you have so much filmed material, you think of a shot you want and the list of shots is no use because no list of shots can describe everything with precision (you know, the list of shots says: buffaloes, peasants, airplanes, medium shot of buffaloes and peasants). Even if it's well drawn up, it's not as exact as your own memory.[12]

On location for PAINTERS PAINTING: Robert Motherwell, de Antonio, Mary Lampson

It is no accident that this methodology is extremely similar to that followed by many of the cinema-direct filmmakers. A related structural principle is implied by the ratios of document to actuality, both aural and visual, in this particular film: on the soundtrack, the interviews overwhelm the documentary sound in a ratio of eight to one, but the image-track presents four times as much vintage document as it does de Antonio's own shots. Visual memory is restructured vocally, and only then is it useful to the present. Proust's voice extracted redemption from the unorganized mass of visual fragments in his memory; and the voice is no less the instrument for de Antonio's characters (and the other personae of the new documentary, I.F. Stone, Antonia Brico, Tom Wicker, Dan Ellsberg, etc.) to confront the visual fragments from the past, and to shore these fragments against ruin. When the enemy has learned to hide its face behind a screen, only the faculty of speech exercised in naming it, denouncing it, can begin the confrontation with it.

IN THE YEAR OF THE PIG, de Antonio's Vietnam epic, separated by an interval of three years from the Dallas film, is the artist's only film to have reaped the dubious honor of an Oscar nomination; fortunately it did not win (according to de Antonio because of a closed shop town's hostility to a non-union film). And the monolith's infinite capacity to absorb even its most ardent opposition was temporarily forestalled (although this oversight can now be said to have been amply rectified by the Academy's later gestures toward Joseph Strick's INTERVIEWS WITH MY LAI VETERANS and now HEARTS AND MINDS, in the true Hollywood tradition of hindsight, surrogate recognition). IN THE YEAR OF THE PIG was also one of de Antonio's three biggest commercial successes (along with POINT OF ORDER and PAINTERS PAINTING, but none of his films has ever lost money), focusing as it did on the decade's most divisive national issue. Financed readily by various Peace Movement millionaires and such prominent liberals as Paul Newman, Leonard Bernstein, and Steve Allen, the film was one of the first documentaries about the Indochina struggle, and it still remains the best.

Yet, despite its place at the center of the anti-war movement in the late sixties, the film's mood seems in marked contrast to the predominant spirit of the movement as it now appears in retrospect. Instead of the passionate moralistic tone of the marches, de Antonio's rhetoric is cool, scholarly, and articulate. Its aim was to convince, not to inflame, to do the homework that the marchers had no time for. In contrast to the two famous French anti-war films of the period, IN THE YEAR OF THE PIG is notable for its shrewd, deliberate, cerebral tone: a far cry from THE SEVENTEENTH PARALLEL, Joris Ivens' epic tribute to the heroism of the North Vietnamese peasant defense, or the emotional, subjective FAR FROM VIETNAM, the collective statement of the Leftish fringes of the New Wave. In a cultural climate already charged with the divisive rhetoric of the war and distrustful of radical polemic, de Antonio's strategy was probably the right one. American liberals were ready for this cold chronological collage of documents arranged with the artist's customary matter-of-factness and unmediated by any external narration. The documents outlined with precision and clarity almost forty years of the history of the Vietnamese struggle; a counterpoint of long authoritative interviews with experts as diverse as a French scholar of Buddhist thought and American congressional leaders provided analysis and background at each stage of the chronology. The faces of the interlocuters repeatedly surface from the past, become familiar guides, and then vanish again as their voices continue on, disembodied, over the stream of visual artifacts. Motifs and refrains, both visual and aural, appear and disappear: early in the film a specially commissioned concerto of helicopter noises drones out of the silence in a deafening crescendo (when the projectionist resists the urge to turn down the volume, as occasionally happens), thereby introducing a major aural motif of the film and the war.

Much of the film's documentary footage came, predictably, from sympathetic sources--the NLF and North Vietnam. However, considerable amounts also originated with ABC, the BBC, and the French Army; and the film often achieves a dramatic emphasis because of this, with the editor's reversing the original intention of a clip through judicious cutting or juxtaposition. Again it is a question of the removal of newsreel and video material from its original context and exploiting the profound distanciation which results. Particularly the American television footage of the war now displays its startling contradictions when shown on a cinema screen, suddenly having lost the lulling effect that its continuous low-definition, saturation in American living rooms is said to have had. Media-critique is thus once more de Antonio's stance:

> There is nothing as bad that's happened concerning the war as the network's coverage of it, because it seems as if they're covering the war whereas in fact they're not. The networks have made the American people comfortable with the war--because it appears between commercials. There's never the question asked, "Why are we doing this? What is this war about?" It's never suggested by anything that occurs on television that we should even be interested in that type of question. Television is a way of avoiding coming to terms with the fact that we're in this war.[13]

In contrast to the previous film's populist flavor, a vivid record of ordinary people caught up in a political turmoil, IN THE YEAR OF THE PIG has little sense of public perspective of the war. The interviewer's encounters with the French scholar and Ho Chi Minh are no doubt highlights of the film; but however indispensable the artist's attention to the experts and the protagonists to his analytical goals and his exposure of the folly and evil of the American leadership, there is a sense that this irrepressible Jeremiah might have profited from the cinema verite model of interest in ordinary people. The concluding credits of his film about American painting, PAINTERS PAINTING, unroll over footage of expressionless crowds wandering around the Museum of Modern Art, and at this point one is suddenly struck by how much this film, as well as others of his oeuvre, would have been enriched by the reflection of the consciousness of such crowds. In YEAR OF THE PIG, de Antonio's short encounters with a deserter, and with GI's on active duty are high points of the film, but

this exploration of the human, everyday dimension of the war is tantalizingly brief. In PAINTERS PAINTING, as in the art world in general, the absence of lay perspective is total.

With HEARTS AND MINDS, Peter Davis makes some progress towards correcting this deficit, aiming for a populist perspective of the war which is not present in de Antonio. Davis' involvement with individual Americans who obediently waged the war is often sensitive and profound, and almost compensates for occasional lapses into clumsiness and offense (the Saigon bordello cinema verite sequence) or facile crowd scenes which rival Leacock and Wiseman in their arrogance and undercut the sensitivity displayed elsewhere in the film. If de Antonio saw the war as a debacle of international imperialism and domestic intrigue, Davis sees it as a national tragedy, not primarily for the Vietnamese people (though he doesn't understate their suffering), but for the American people. Employing a characteristic de Antonio collage, though in a less rigorous, non-chronological manner, Davis confronts participants and witnesses both in the present and the past, from the Oklahoma ex-flier who weeps as he remembers his bombing raids, to the infamous Colonel Patton who, in a video tape from the late sixties, praises his men for being "good killers" (de Antonio used the same tape, but not in Davis's living color). A sense of national failure of spirit emerges from this application of the collage approach, despite the ideological confusion of the overall effect, the blurring of class lines in Davis's conception of the American people, and a tendency towards a muddled sentimentality. Like de Antonio, Davis also presents chief protagonists in the conflict--Ellsberg, Rostow, Westmoreland, etc., but what finally remains with the spectator is the impression of a community, divided, defensive, penitent, and fearful. Davis's early television documentary, THE SELLING OF THE PENTAGON (1971) is on the whole a much better film, ironically because network requirements apparently demanded more coherence (the topic was also much more compact and assailable--the public relations activities of the Defense Department). However, the topic was less amenable to the kind of populist sensibility which Davis later reveals in the best moments of HEARTS AND MINDS. Morton Silverstein's TV films, as we have seen, represent the potential of television journalism to reflect the lives and viewpoints of ordinary people at its best.

Cinda Firestone's ATTICA is another recent documentary which builds upon de Antonio's formula in YEAR OF THE PIG (she is a former editor of his) and in addition shares in the populist sensibility which is the most important achievement of the radical underground current of films. She relies much more than her mentor on long interviews with her subjects, the participants and witnesses in the prison revolt. And unlike Davis, she does not lose sight of the political basis of the tragedy and resists the easy resources of sentimentality.

De Antonio's fifth film was AMERICA IS HARD TO SEE (1970), a title taken from Robert Frost. It dealt with a single event from the recent past rather than an onoing historical process of several decades like the Vietnam war. By restricting his focus to the McCarthy campaign for the Presidency in 1968, de Antonio created a more concentrated, more specific kind of political analysis than the unwieldy subject of the war permitted. In addition, the McCarthy film was closer to its subject chronologically than any of the others, a time lapse of only two years separating document/event from recollection/analysis. This is a very short historical perspective indeed, but a dramatic one nevertheless: the abrupt changes in even the sartorial aspect of the campaigners as they emerge from the 1968 documents into the 1970 interviews, the pronounced oscillation between the 1968 campaign euphoria and the 1970 sober realism tinged with nostalgia, the hagiographical atmosphere with which only two years' hindsight surrounds the documentary appearances of Robert Kennedy and the references to Martin Luther King...all contribute to a sense of the uncontrollable acceleration of the historical process, two years having seen such a radical transformation of cast and ambience in the American political arena. The film is at times a critique of the naive enthusiasm of the McCarthy supporters, from the gloomy perspective of Nixonian 1970, and otherwise a meditation on the very real possibility of a reformist alternative politics within the system. AMERICA IS HARD TO SEE is at once a (relatively) bright film, and a highly ambiguous one. The victories in New Hampshire and Oregon are miracles captured on video, Johnson's resignation speech a tentative defeat of the enemy, and the charm and affable rationality of the chief protagonist of the film himself a refreshing glimpse of an apparently real, attractive alternative. Yet the awareness is always present that the film is, after all, a post-mortem, and the campaign so euphorically pursued and relived was indeed a failure.

Again, a low-key chronological approach follows the event from its beginning, slowly and conscientiously to its end. As a historian de Antonio is fastidious: he is careful to balance whatever mythologization is inevitable in his subject matter--the heroics, the flag-waving, the paranoia, the despair--with a down-to-earth examination of the mechanics of electoral politics on the smallest level. He seeks out documents which show the monents of groundwork and individual effort which cumulatively make up the historical process. The potential of alternative politics is discovered in the images and voices of ordinary people with specific goals, and in those of top strategists planning and then evaluating the maneuvers.

De Antonio's focus on specific topical issues --a senate hearing, a war, a political campaign, etc., does not mean that his interest is restricted to these events, as we have seen. The challenge of addressing abstract theoretical problems through immediate, topical subjects, is a traditional one for the radical filmmaker: he or she must always satisfy the demands for the concrete and topical, by box-office and audience, and perhaps even by the photographic-representative nature of the medium, despite whatever interest he/she may have in more abstract or theoretical issues. It is to de Antonio's credit that he habitually succeeds in extending the microcosm to the macrocosm, yet never makes this extension in a way that is un-"democratic" or facile. The step from the specific to the general is never transparent and often difficult, yet it always there implicitly, engaging his spectators to complete the connections themselves. It is perhaps this aspect of de Antonio's films that is most responsible for their extraordinary durability, a feature that is by no means a common one in the radical cinema.

The Army-McCarthy hearing, as we have seen, for example, becomes a pretext for an analysis of what de Antonio saw as a symptomatic emphasis on "Technique" in American life.[14] In the same way, RUSH TO JUDGMENT becomes an attempt "not to prove the innocence of Oswald, but to show how the American machine works,"[15] and YEAR OF THE PIG is an analysis of the media's role in legitimizing the politics of imperialism and monopoly capitalism. Similarly, AMERICA IS HARD TO SEE contains a consciousness, beneath its surface optimism, of the grim inevitability that the system must ultimately defuse even this hope, using even dissent to entrench itself in its own inertia. From this viewpoint, de Antonio's entire oeuvre becomes a continuing Marcusean essay on the modern state and its manner of making its tryanny palatable. Yet the films continue, one by one, with no end in sight, and their presence themselves contradicts de Antonio's apparent recognition of this fatality. The Weather film is certain to add an important new perspective to this continuing essay.

AMERICA IS HARD TO SEE treated a personality as the symbol of the system's potential to renew itself from within: MILLHOUSE, another, different kind of portrait, appeared a year later, and treated another personality, Nixon at the height of his power, as emblematic of the corruption of the System and its tenacious opposition to that self-renewal. "The film attacks the System, the credibility of the System, by focusing on the obvious and perfect symbol for that System."[16] De Antonio's blackest, most sardonic, and most despairing film, MILLHOUSE is also his funniest, as he himself terms it, "the first real attempt at a real documentary comedy."[17] But immediately the Marcusean problematic again imposes itself: is the ability of the radical subculture to laugh at the enemy merely the reverse side of that enemy's power to absorb its dissent with just as much glee?

Though the filmmaker was to claim that MILLHOUSE is not a personal attack, whatever else it may be, it *is* indeed an attack, *par excellence*, merciless and brilliant, worthy of Swift and Pope, delivered *ad hominem* and below the belt. De Antonio certainly deserved the honor of inclusion on Nixon's celebrated enemies list as much as anyone. MILLHOUSE (its full title is MILLHOUSE, A WHITE COMEDY) is predictably conducted as a chronological record of Nixon's career, in fact as a parody of the famous crisis-to-crisis chronology which Nixon himself set forth in his pre-presidential memoirs. The system which Nixon had manipulated continuously to his own advantage for over a quarter-century is closely scrutinized. As with the previous films, the basic strategy is to remove documents from their original context and re-examine them in a context of (here, satiric) juxtaposition with actuality. The most memorable example is the infamous Checkers speech, where the nervous young candidate gravely tries out the ropes of the medium to which he would habitually resort when under attack over the next twenty years. Once removed from its intended context it becomes a monument of hilarity. An additional twist in MILLHOUSE is the humor derived from the art of the out-take. This means of confronting the public man with the private man is developed here to perfection, often without cutting. The changes the Nixonian face undergoes as it confronts the video cameras constitute a sublime image of the duplicity fostered by the system of media politics. And Nixon's unwitting contributions to de Antonio's art of collage are more expressive of the man than any other moments in the film.

Although *ad hominem* mockery hardly seems a legitimate tool of "democratic didacticism," there is a stratum to the film of utmost gravity, developed by serious commentators in the traditional de Antonio style. The homework is done no less efficiently for the fun: the facts and the documents are presented with equal authoritativeness. De Antonio's scrutiny of the political personality from the earliest red-baiting and smear-campaign days to the smoothest White House piety is as methodical and thorough as it is irreverent.

It is ironic that MILLHOUSE, that arch-example of an anti-exemplary biography, should provide the model for an important sub-genre of the new documentary, the exemplary biography, the documentary homage. Jerry Bruck's I.F. STONE'S WEEKLY and Jill Godmilow's ANTONIA are two of the best known of the new biographical films, all built more or less faithfully on the model provided by MILLHOUSE, that is, the collage of vintage document and commentary, and the extensive use of interviews and monologues to penetrate the personality under examination. (The National Film Board of Canada's film biographies of Dr. Norman Bethune and John Grierson are two other admirable prototypes for this sub-genre). Such films, given the advantage of the posture of tribute rather than attack, have often been able to enlist the co-operation of their subjects, thereby making the invaluable addition of his or her own voice to the commentary, and varying amounts of cinema verite footage to the collage as well. The latter brings to the portrait the cinema verite's undeniable talent for capturing behavioral authenticity. In contrast to the accumulative effect of the new film portrait, those of the sixties relying solely on verite language seem superficial indeed--Stravinsky, Fonda, Dylan, Cash, etc. De Antonio has demonstrated that the addition of historical background, contemporary and external commentary, and the direct on-camera confrontation with the subject, are essential to the genre. Instead of the suggestive cinema verite cameo, limited by the counterculture's and the System's shared synchronic conception of the personality, we have in this way a more penetrating diachronic exploration of individuals, one elaborating their growth in relation to the social forces around them. Cinema verite reinforced individualist, behaviorist ideology; the de Antonio collage makes possible a new collective, materialist view of the human reality.

If MILLHOUSE is de Antonio's most exaggerated rejection of the network and verite ideal of "objectivity," PAINTERS PAINTING (1973) hovers disturbingly close to that dubious standard which the filmmaker's previous career had so convincingly repudiated. Outside of the film, de Antonio made no secret of the definite reservations about contemporary painting which we might have expected from him:

> If you consider American art since the war, it's a cold art for a cold war. It's an art "non-engage." The best American painters have no point of view on the world. They have become part of the world of business. The rich families collect their works. McLuhan admires technology, as John Cage does in music, who has passed from music to technology. This is political, because you are upholding in this way American values; when you are neutral you defend the existing order: and that's the danger of McLuhan.[18]

And criticism of postwar American (official) art might well be the duty of an artist who has spent a decade of his life in films denouncing the triumph of technique over content--in politics, in communications, in film (including the film aesthetics of that group of New American independent filmmakers, most akin to the postwar movements in painting, whom de Antonio once termed "Jonas Mekas and his troupe of trend-sniffing mercenary cavalry,")[19] and in every phase of American life. However the viewer is hard-pressed to read such an attitude into PAINTERS PAINTING. In fact, it is a film that even CBS might be proud to broadcast, it is so wary of evaluating the phenomenon under study. As a film, then, by an avowed Marxist about an artistic avant-garde, PAINTERS PAINTING encapsules all of the contradictions in the murky relationships of the Left to such avant-gardes.

Predictably, de Antonio readily admits to such contradictions in the film:

> ....it's presented me with several problems personally, which anyone who has seen my work would guess, since I regard myself as a Marxist social critic of the existing social system in this country and yet the painters and the way in which they work

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> are essentially manifestations of a very conservative aspect of America. The painting itself is not conservative (though it is apolitical) but it's part of a machine which runs this country. And so, if I have to make a choice between American painting and the attempt to turn men's [sic] minds and the search for a collective soul, then I'm more interested in what Mao is doing than in the art of my friends. And yet I'm making the film: perhaps it's something I have to do to get it out of my system.[20]

The film's virtually sole critical perception comes from the half-satirical encounter with Robert Scull, the self-styled Maecenas of the New York art world, and his since-jettisoned wife. The interview brings out only a momentary flash of the MILLHOUSE de Antonio, as the realization half-emerges that virtually all contemporary painting depends on the whims of these dubiously motivated, superficially endowed, nouveaux-riches, and on the personal tastes of the establishment art critics whose pontifical pronouncements on surfaces and textures are also part of the collage.

Still, as an uncritical chronicle of post-war painting (with an evaluation of its elitist audience, marketplace orientation, and incestuous, conspiratorial inspiration hardly implied), PAINTERS PAINTING represents an additional refinement of the essay-collage form which de Antonio had been developing for a decade. Now the past-present, document-analysis oscillation is sharpened by the 35mm definition and brilliant acrylic color of the footage from the present. The documents recording the Masters in the act, Pollack pouring, and de Kooning and the others doing whatever we are told they were doing, presented in reverent fifties black and white, form an evocative counterpoint with the color images of their completed work and of their successors working and talking a generation later. The tendency of the present generation of painters and sculptors to talk and conceptualize at least as much (and as well) as they create makes the interviews all the more penetrating. The only exception to the respectful bourgeois-Romantic perspective of Art adopted by the film as a whole arises from the interview with Andy Warhol. This artist is easily as fascinating on the screen as the haunting menagerie which he himself has led across it over the last ten years; and in the film, he is unique among the artists interviewed for his refusal to play the self-important, oracular role which attracts the others.

PAINTERS PAINTING also continues the tendency of the historical films of the seventies to incorporate some elements of cinema verite into the structure of the collage. De Antonio balances the interviews, ranging from manifesto-like monologues to CHELSEA GIRLS chitchat, with revealing though somewhat stiff footage of the personalities outside of the interview format. The flexibility of such an eclecticism is richly demonstrated.

However rewarding this film might be for those observers of Rockefeller Art who would not be distrubed by such a non-committal attitude, it is to be hoped that with this film (partly financed by the sale of paintings de Antonio himself had collected during the fifties from his artist friends), the artist has indeed "got it out of his system."

A far more rewarding film on avant-garde culture is Jean-Marie Straub's excellent short work on Schoenberg, also a film based on the structural principle of collage. In it Straub no doubt shares de Antonio's reverential attitude to his subject, but balances it not only with a clear elaboration of the historical context for Schoenberg's work, but also, importantly, with a statement by Brecht reflecting on the very problem the earlier biographical material had dealt with (anti-Semitism). The insight provoked by this disruption of the biographical moment with a (literally) Brechtian intervention, is an achievement that de Antonio might profitably have imitated in PAINTERS PAINTING, to redeem what otherwise is a disturbingly ambiguous homage to an avant-garde movement which could use more analysis than accolades.

Now that HEARTS AND MINDS has finally succeeded in reaching its public, and public anticipation of the Weather Underground film is high, there seems no reason to doubt that the new documentary is in reasonably good health, with every possibility of expanding its audience even more. Despite the enormous debt that Davis clearly owes de Antonio, there are important differences between them. Davis belongs more to the tradition of liberal, humanitarian journalism than to that of incisive, political analysis, and thus bears less resemblance to de Antonio than to Marcel Ophuls, with whom he has already been compared in the popular press several times. Though both Davis and Ophuls use modified versions of the basic de Antonio "document-dossier" format, they share explicit moralistic, bourgeois-humanist perspectives of history which de Antonio has always been careful to avoid. For de Antonio, history is neither therapeutic or cathartic, nor, worse still, a paradigm of the moral relativity of human acts--it is instructive. Weeping over Vietnam with Davis, and *mea-culpa*-ing over the Occupation with Ophuls only serves to becloud the social forces in play. De Antonio's review of HEARTS AND MINDS in a 1974 *University Review* condemns the Davis film for "political emptiness," "an inability to understand either the United States or Vietnam," a "(sneering), japing, middle-class liberal superiority," and "patronizing attitudes,"--in short it is "heartless" and "mindless."[21] De Antonio's objections are by and large valid; nevertheless Davis's film deserved the wide audience it reached even if it only serves to prevent Americans from forgetting Indochina as quickly as they seem to be doing. And it is to be praised for speaking to its audiences with moral and emotional force. It can't be denied that Davis's broad appeal is a tactical virtue which other more rigorous and uncompromising Vietnam films lack, for example YEAR OF THE TIGER by Deirdre English, Dave Davis, and Steve Talbot (a casualty of the official-tour-behind-the-lines syndrome), or the Jane Fonda and Haskell Wexler work, INTRODUCTION TO THE ENEMY (a far superior film because it is more personal, but one apparently still restricted to the committed circuit). Of course the definitive film of the Vietnam war --and the Cold war--has still to be made. And de Antonio has provided the surest models with which to begin.

In the meantime, as the Weather film nears completion, the filmmaker has two projects in the conception phase. Both ideas are for fiction films, a shift in gears of no small consequence for a documentarist of his standing. Which project will materialize first, if either, is anybody's guess: a fictional treatment of Philip Agee's book, INSIDE THE COMPANY: CIA DIARY, or a story of a famous radical filmmaker seen through the eyes of government agencies who keep him under surveillance(!). What is certain is that de Antonio, in leaving behind him (temporarily, it is to be hoped) the documentary mode of discourse, will not abandon the rich creative energy, the obstinate commitment to rationality and to change, and the clear-sighted historical consciousness which have made him one of the major American filmmakers of our time. It is perhaps this last dimension of his art, its investment in the importance of historical analysis, which has constituted his most significant contribution to American radical culture, and which will no doubt continue to do so with his new turn toward the mode of fiction.

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[1]Robert Kramer, quoted in "Newsreel" ("A Montage of Programmatic Comments by Newsreel Filmmakers"). *Film Quarterly*, No. 22 (Winter, 1968) p. 45.

[2]Peter Biskind, quoted in "Radical American Film? A Questionnaire." *Cineaste*, Vol. V, No. 4, p. 15.

[3]*Ibid.*

[4]Bernard Weiner, "Radical Scavenging: An Interview with Emile de Antonio." *Film Quarterly*, No. 25, Fall '71, p. 3.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 9.

[6]Michel Ciment and Bernard Cohn, "Entretien avec Emile de Antonio." *Positif*. No 113 (Feb. 1970), p. 28. My translation.

[7]Sergei M. Eisenstein, *Film Sense*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1942, p. 28.

[8]Weiner, interview, p. 8.

[9]*Ibid.*, p. 10.

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 10.

[11]*Ibid.*, p. 8.

[12]Ciment, interview, p. 30.

[13]Weiner, interview, p. 7.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 8.

[15]*Ibid.*, p. 7.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 6

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 15.

[18]Ciment, interview, p. 36.

[19]Weiner, interview, p. 10.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 14.

[21]Emile de Antonio, "Visions of Vietnam," *University Review*, No. 41 (Dec. 1974), p. 21.

MERCHANT OF FOUR SEASONS

structures of alienation

--Barbara Leaming

Rainer Werner Fassbinder is certainly the most prolific, and perhaps the most significant filmmaker to emerge from that diverse group now known as "The Young German Cinama." Fassbinder's films are the product of the second wave of directors working in West Germany, a group whose cinema is bringing to fruition some of the aspirations expressed by the original signers of the now famous 1962 Oberhausen Manifesto. This manifesto proclaimed the death of the already moribund post-war German film and called for the birth of a new state-subsidized, non-profit-dominated cinema. It eventually animated a striking Western experiment in the possibilities for a cinema largely freed from the ruthless demands of the market. State-subsidies were set up according to a system in which a portion of any profits were then appropriated for new productions. Today, the original law has been severely modified with the addition of a proviso requiring that a filmmaker, to qualify for a subsidy, must present a previous film which has earned a certain percentage of profit. This proviso, of course, has the effect of curbing the more extreme filmic experiments. And, together with other revisions of the terms of the state-subsidies, this proviso has largely undermined the most positive aspects of the original plan. However, during the years when the subsidized cinema was operating effectively, the West German cinema was regenerated and the new filmmakers became firmly enough established that, now, the West German cinema is among the most interesting in Europe.

At the age of 30, Fassbinder is one of a widely diversified range of directors who developed within this context. With a startling number of feature films already to his credit, Fassbinder has continued at the same time to work in the theater. Very often he moves back and forth between the two media with a single work and identical cast. The results of this astonishing productivity have been remarkably and consistently significant.

In a filmic oeuvre as diverse and complex as that of Fassbinder's, it is difficult to select a single film as representative. One might look closely at the reflexivity of his supremely elegant BEWARD THE HOLY WHORE--a film which explores the semantic limits of the use of camera movement; or one could deconstruct the apparently seamless "objectivity" of his FEAR EATS THE SOUL--a film which in fact is perhaps one of Fassbinder's most highly stylized works to date.

Yet, if one chooses to look closely at a single film of Fassbinder's, his 1971 MERCHANT OF FOUR SEASONS seems particularly characteristic of the director's concerns thus far in a still emerging career. MERCHANT OF FOUR SEASONS stands as a remarkable articulation of the structures of alienation. Rife with structures of disjuncture, the coherence of their articulation

enables Fassbinder's film to function as a reflection of the alienated subjectivity of the central character, Hans the fruit peddler.

Hans' story is quite simple: he is excessively mediocre, rather short, fat and quite unattractive. Through the use of flashbacks, we see that his life has been a series of confrontations with pressures imposed on him by various women, each of whom seems to be either taller, more beautiful, or more powerful than Hans. The women in turn see Hans as an embarrassment of one sort or another. His marriage--to the much taller Irmgaard--is a complex of mutually inflicted injuries. After a particularly savage drunken assault by Hans, Irmgaard takes the couple's young daughter and flees to her in-laws, thus precipitating the central actions of the film. Hans persues her there, only to have the heart attack which necessitates his metamorphosis into an employer and, ultimately, his retreat, first into silence, and finally, into death. After his heart attack, unable to continue his heavy work of pushing a fruit cart himself, Hans is forced to hire a man to do the work for him. Prior to his metamorphosis into employer, Hans' alienation has been largely felt as a purely philosophical or psychological condition; after his transformation into one who purchases the labor of another, Hans' alienation becomes a felt political and social condition.

Unknown to Hans, his first employee has had a brief and abortive sexual encounter with Irmgaard. Humiliated and dehumanized, Irmgaard instigates a scheme whereby the man will cheat Hans out of a share of his profits and share them with her. Actually, she is acting in revenge, for she is aware that Hans is covertly observing each of the hawker's transactions. The man is quickly discovered and fired.

A chance meeting with an old pal from his days in the Foreign Legion, results in Hans' hiring of Harry, his second helper. Harry works so well that he gradually subsumes Hans' role at home as well, as Hans sinks deeper and deeper into a silent retreat. As the film ends, Hans has killed himself with whiskey (forbidden after his heart attack)--while his wife and friends, passive and isolated by their alienation, watch him without stirring. Irmagaard then begins the whole cycle anew by proposing to--and being accepted by--Harry.

In its inability to make cause and effect connections, Hans' consciousness may be read as an illustration of alienation. Like the worker on the assembly line who cannot see beyond the part to the whole, Hans is unable to perceive the connection between the small bit of control he exercises directly and the finished product, which is no longer comprehensible--either psychologically or in actual fact--as the product of *his* labor. Thus Hans perceives his life as a series of discrete and disconnected events. Unable to perceive any cause and effect relationships, he is thus unable to assert the possibility of control over his own life. Hans, quite simply, is not capable of seeing how *he* can change the things which seem to "happen" to him. His condition seems "natural" to him--as if it is not subject to alteration. Unable to comprehend history--even his personal history--as something made by people, Hans is doomed by his subjective vision of disjuncture which limits his capcity for efficacious analysis and action.

It is this alienated subjectivity, then, which is reflected--or more significantly, revealed--in the structures of Fassbinder's film. It is principally a structure marked by a sense of isolations, of connections cut off, of fragments. Stylistically and structurally, Fassbinder refuses wholeness--and the illusion of the natural as well. There is nothing beyond the dislocated fragments which sucessively occupy his screen: Fassbinder does not allow for connections between the successive views of Hans' world.

The film is marked by an extremely significant and specific use of the close-up. In MERCHANCE OF FOUR SEASONS the close-up shots, in which the part is viewed in isolation from the whole, are done in such a way as to underline the isolation of the fragment. For example, when Hans and Irmgaard are seen in bed together after his return from the hospital, there is no real sense in which the giant close-up of her nipple can be said to exist in any meaningful connection to a "whole" and "human" person. Rather, the nipple, which fills the frame, serves explicitly to undercut the surface impression of genuine eroticism which we might have expected from such a scene. Examined under the relentless microscope of the camera eye, Fassbinder has given us a formal equivalent for the reified eroticism all too typical of our experience. He has replicated the experience of the close-up we have all heard spoken of in film histories in which the naive film audience, unaccustomed to the "conventions" of the close-up, unable to "read" them, is terrified--here "distanced" is the operative terminology--by the dismembered body it sees on the screen. Fassbinder's effect, not only with his fragmented close-ups of the human body but from the episodic fragmented structure of the narrative itself, is also terrifying--but terrifying in terms of the critique of alienation which is implicit in the very structure of the film itself.

The microscopic blowups of details characterizing the close-ups are echoed in the overblown gestures of the actors in the film. MERCHANT OF FOUR SEASONS is characterized by an insistence on posing, on hollowing of familiar gestures which by being exaggerated are emptied of any genuine meaning. Many are gestures of kitsch and pornography--the woman adjusting her garter beneath the upraised skirt of her dress; the fantastic protective gesture of the brother-in-law who sweeps all of the women behind him to shelter them from the brutish menace of Hans--but most striking of all are the repeated postures of the odalisque. In the desperate scene when Hans makes a last visit to "The Love of His Life," we see her strip and recline tensely posed on the bed, her hip arched so sharply that the gesture rivets our attention. It moves instantly beyond eroticism, baring itself rather as a subject for our analysis: "The Love of His Life's" odalisque pose is never a naturalistic gesture, as the hip remains frozen in a gesture of provocation long after Hans has closed the door and left the room. It is a gesture which expects no response--a gesture which never calls out for completion in the way the uncompleted gestures in John Ford often do, for example. Fassbinder's filmic gestures remain deliberate and brutal disruptions, underlining the absence of connections between characters and events--the ambience of alienation--in much the same manner as his dialogue does.

The cliches, which constitute the only language available to the characters who people the world of Fassbinder's cinema, force us to recognize the impossibility of communication between these characters. They cannot talk to each other, for they speak only in a language which has been systematically emptied of meaning. They speak words which are never their own--once again there is mediation at every level, even that of words. They cannot name their thoughts, for to name them would be perhaps to begin to act. Instead, the dialogue, which we and the characters themselves expect to serve as a means of breaking out of the terrifying isolation from which they suffer, instead only effects a further intensification of the barriers which separate them one from another. They remain cut off, trapped--and brutally exposed at the same time to the merciless eye of the close-up shot and to the brutally unyielding flatness of the very color of the film itself.

MERCHANT OF FOUR SEASONS is shot in brilliant primary colors of an extraordinary flatness, perhaps most similar to the kind of color used by Alfred Hitchcock in MARNIE. Unlike a rich, dense color film which provides a sensuous background which surround the figures of the characters themselves, the flatness of the impenetrable brightness of Fassbinder's backdrops seems to force the figures out into our vision. It provides no shadow, no measure of escape from our scrutiny and anaysis. It is closed as is the extraordinary spatial construction of the film.

Fassbinder's characters live in confining fortress or traplike spaces. You cannot navigate the geography of Hans' apartment. It is a series of boxlike rooms without connecting passages between them. It is an apartment, particularly in the montage of interviews when Hans hires an assistant after his illness, from which people depart or enter only by magic--the magic of editing--and never by ordinary means. It is a filmic space which insists on asserting its theatricality by the refusal to utilize the existing off-screen space. The release which the continuous space might have provided, the sense of continuity, is entirely unsuited to Fassbinder's world view here, and thus it is denied. There is never any place else to go. Even the dream sequences, the flashbacks, are clearly disjunct from the trap of the everyday reality because of the utilization of blue tinting which makes them "different"--unconnected--and hence unable to function as "alternative" worlds which might relieve the claustrophobic reality Hans exists in. The other major spaces of the film, in addition to the confines of the apartment, are the courtyards where Hans and his assistant hawk the produce. The courtyards are too mazelike closed spaces, made more oppressive by the circular pans of the camera which pick up the turns and upwards stares of the peddlers. As the camera points up and turns round and round, it seems to try to climb over the walls of the trap--and almost succeeds. Here again then Fassbinder is deliberately creating an overtly theatrical anti-illusionistic space, going even further, in fact, by actually creating a kind of wing structure as Hans seems to go and come from the "wings" to spy on his worker.

The closed courtyards echo Fassbinder's much-favored shots through doorways or through windows, forcing us repeatedly not simply to share Hans' mediated subjectivity but finally to analyze it. By refusing to allow us simply to "identify," by his structures of alienation, Fassbinder establishes us the audience as critical observers of what traditionally would be expected to be the most fitting subject matter for the style of "naturalism." For here the stylized acting, gestures, space and overall structure of the film remain in basic tension with the superficial subject matter of the film. A closer reading of this tension reveals that in fact the banality is no more than superficial and that the actual subject matter of MERCHANT OF FOUR SEASONS is a highly complex investigation of the structures of alienation in modern industrial societies. As we have seen, the formal disjunctures we have located in the film cinematically illustrate that social alienation. Cinematic devices assume the task of social critique. □

The Films of Ken Loach and Tony Garnett

Speaking Directly to All People

--Richard Fudge

In any analysis of politically oriented cinema in Britain over the past decade, the names of Ken Loach and Tony Garnett stand out. Financially, it hasn't been easy for anyone to make or distribute films in Britain, particularly if their intentions limit what backers see as their commercial potential, and all filmmakers' outputs have been modified by this. Ken Loach and Tony Garnett, as director and producer respectively, worked together at the BBC for a number of years and produced several outstanding plays/films of both artistic and social importance. This formed a foundation from which they were able to establish their own production company and work independently on cinema and television films of their own choosing--though, nevertheless, within the confines of what they could get money for.

Unlike most British filmmakers who came to prominence during the sixties, they have not sought the easier production opportunities of the U.S. film industry and, furthermore, their choice of subject-matter has severely restricted their potential for distribution in the U.S.: consequently their work remains almost entirely unknown to American audiences. This article undertakes a brief survey of their films and their attitudes to film.

Their early collaborations consist entirely of television plays/films for the BBC Drama Department and these remain as important as anything they have done, and confirm, for me at least, Loach and Garnett's importance. Others, such as Boorman or Russell or Schlesinger, having established their talent and reputation at the BBC, have left television altogether and concentrated on cinema, whereas Loach and Garnett have always seemed keen to work in both media. There seems to be no clear-cut reason behind their decision and it would appear to be a combination of artistic and financial considerations. Loach, in a recent conversation we had in preparation for this article, made no secret that artistically the cinema screen is preferable to that of the television, though foremost among his considerations is of making a particular film rather than working in a particular medium. (For example, their current project for the BBC was originally conceived as a movie, but they simply had to go where the money was available--and seemingly with few regrets.) Garnett seems more ideologically committed to television and has made the observation:

> The state of dramatic fiction in television is of some importance to the cultural life of the community. For most professionals, but particularly for writers and directors, television is their training ground and their life. The theatre is a minority art patronized by the middle class and the educated young which provides a home for only a few. The cinema film is made by a handful of the privileged for the greedy maw of the profit-takers. Only in television is it possible for a large number to work consistently across barriers of class and cultural background and to speak directly to all people. This is a priceless gift which, if accepted, can be of great significance to the imaginative life of society.

This, admittedly, was written in 1970 when perhaps their access to both media was more open, but it nonetheless illustrates very accurately what I see to be the most admirable of Loach and Garnett's intentions. The major characters in all their work have been drawn exclusively from the working classes and it is the powerless in the community whose cause they have been most eager to pursue. The television treatment of the working class in Britain rarely reflects seriousness or integrity of purpose, and this, combined with the working class' inability to participate actively in media, has continually excluded them from what Garnett has referred to as "the imaginative life of society." In other than personal terms, it's difficult to evaluate how far Loach and Garnett, and their few like-minded colleagues, have actually made contact with the social classes to whom they speak, though Loach, cautious in his claims, feels it is nevertheless worth the attempt.

Loach's work, while firmly romantic, is not concerned merely with the larger-than-life reflection of working class culture that characterizes the humanistic and pseudo-radical British documentary tradition. His most successful work has always been built from issues rather than emotion, and though he sets out to immerse an audience, Loach's occasional scenes of pathetic sentimentality clearly detract from the larger successes of the films. Working in a medium which has institutionalized the confusion between emotion and sentimentality, it must be difficult to know where to pitch one's product if you are to reach an audience that has been force-fed a diet incongruous with one's own purpose and approach, if you are still to make contact--something of the familiar must, presumably, remain, though it is not in Loach's character, I believe, to patronize. Loach's first feature, POOR COW, now considered by him to be entirely worthless, shows him to be struggling to find the right key in which to communicate with the popular imagination of cinema-goers.

Similarly there exists the problem of an over-abstraction of issues, where the arguments under discussion interfere with the otherwise everyday flow of realistic life one attempts to present. This is the perennial dilemma for "political" filmmakers if they are to break ground with an audience unfamiliar or unsympathetic to overtly political discussion. An audience who might be alienated from a tract might be less shy of the same arguments if presented in fictional terms through a sympathetic character. For example, in 1966 Loach and Garnett made a television film entitled CATHY COME HOME, in which they discussed the inadequate provisions made for homeless families in Britain, largely through the dramatic presentation of the central character, Cathy. This drama, followed by a compilation of factual statistics in the final credits, had an enormous impact on British audiences and its central arguments were brought into public discussion in a manner perhaps less likely with a straight-forward documentary presentation.

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Nevertheless, a later television film, THE BIG FLAME, written by Jim Allen, which sought to discuss the equally personal crises of workers in a dock dispute in which the army was finally brought in to break the workers' occupation, was too overtly political to reach the popular imagination with the same immediacy or sense of identification. Those militant dock workers were no more or less socially deviant than the homeless Cathy, and yet, expressed more explicitly as a political issue, their problems were not largely regarded as interesting or pertinent. Many similar characters appear in Loach and Garnett's present project, DAYS OF HOPE, also by Allen (a four-part television film which follows several characters through the years 1914 to 1926), and yet the characters are, from what little I have seen of it, more fully drawn and their commitment to ideas during the First World War or the General Strike more visible in personal terms.

Their work is characterized by this endeavor to personalize the issues facing the working class community and to present these in terms both plausible and compelling to an audience. This personalization is central, I believe, to their strategy, expressed by Garnett, of "speaking directly to all people," whether it be in the cinema or television. This desire to reach a broad, non-exclusive audience, while at the same time carrying on a debate or analysis commonly found only in more intellectualized and, consequently, elitist cultural forms, might inhibit the very discussion it attempts. Indeed, even Loach's firm position within the documentary eye might not succeed, for there is a tradition in Britain (and the States for that matter) of naturalism in the documentary movement that fights shy of overt analysis. And while they by no means fill it, Loach and Garnett have placed themselves right in the middle of this gap between naturalistic documentation and a structural analysis of working class life.

To a large extent their most unresolved dilemma emerges from this: analysis tends to require a generalization of statement and view, and yet they seek to avoid generalization in their desire for realism.

"Not just to understand the world, but to change it, and to point out how it can be changed," is how Tony Garnett described what he thought Loach and he were trying to do. As a normative view of the filmmaker's aspirations this may be acceptable, but it is rather too bold a manifesto to realize in the categorical spirit of its assertion. Although Loach is more guarded than Garnett in speaking of pre-defined goals, their films do not achieve the overt manner of analysis that Garnett might have us believe they seek. There is, of course, material in the films open to analysis and Loach while scripting, shooting and editing consciously articulates a world view; and though their most recent feature, FAMILY LIFE, comes nearest to Garnett's ideal, an earlier film like KES is too open to myriad interpretation

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beyond the analysis which it itself offers, to claim that it points out how things can be changed.

Nevertheless, Loach and Garnett do make exceptionally public films. Both the ideas contained in the films and the dramatic construction which supports these are immensely credible and accessible. But I think it wrong to call KES a failure because it is not specific enough in its indictment or in suggesting a program of reform, and a brief discussion of the film will itself elicit the film's strength. KES is primarily an indictment of British educational provision to develop in the working class community the ability to respond beyond the habitual and essentially narrow confines of industrial and material drudgery. It succeeds beyond the level of mere fictional portrayal of a young boy's experience of school by selectively dealing with the inner imagination of the boy in reaction to the worthless institutional arrangements that thwart such imagination and individuality at every stage. Such a boy, for example, would be little moved by a Godard film, whereas the relatively down-to-earth nature of Loach's analysis illustrates, in a vocabulary accessible to all, the subordination of the individual to industrial and bureaucratic convenience.

The first style successfully explored by Loach and Garnett to transform the otherwise fictional into a more realistic or factual assertion was that of the documentary drama. CATHY COME HOME for instance was, by the standards of the day, a documentary about a homeless family, except that it involved actors working from a script. Visually its camerawork created the illusion of a documentary camera taking note of events that occurred independently of any fictional conception, loosely organized scenes containing all the realistic irrelevancies of bystanders interrupting both soundtrack and frame, of "untidy" editing seeming not to be building a dramatic plot, and of natural lighting and locations not usually identified with the previously studio-based productions of the BBC Drama Department. Neither camera or microphone pretended to be unobtrusive, with actors frequently speaking directly to both, in the style of an interview, and their speech "flawed" by characteristic realism. Though the technique of presenting fiction as fact raised moral objections from some quarters, it asserted the realistic basis of drama and encouraged an analysis of the issues involved.

Though Loach has never released anything so emphatically documentary in style, the realism that characterizes all his work derives from a documentary model and serves similar purposes. This sense of dramatized reality stems above all else from the performances Loach gets from his actors, and this is perhaps his most accurate skill. From CATHY COME HOME onwards, he has chosen his actors, it seems, for the sense of shared experience they can bring to a script. To a large extent this has meant recruiting people with either no previous experience of acting or with no direct experience of TV or film. (That he has not been able to recruit such people exclusively is, ironically, the result of protective measures necessarily taken by the British acting union.)

The use of such actors brings a freshness and dramatic conviction and is a principal element of the modest pace which Loach sets for his films. His editing is slow moving, his camera angles simple, seeming to decide at the outset of a take what he wants in frame and sticking to it--plus this accompanying "un-stylized" style of his actors (their style stemming essentially from their own sense of the situation) combine to generate the powerful modesty of his image.

Spending a day on location, I was fascinated to see how he organized what often seem like the accidental and stumbling improvisations of his cast. Not surprisingly, it wasn't like that at all. However tired it sounds, Loach's strongest virtue is his personal relationship with his cast. He is an extremely quiet, hesitant person with his sense of others more immediately evident than his sense of himself. Consequently, even for those among his cast whose background does not lead them to assume a professional trust and respect, the personal element is the powerful factor in his directorial control. Chosen, as I have said, for their personal proximity to the characters they are to "portray," Loach's advice is for them to bring the character from themselves.

At the time I had recently re-seen KES and read the novel on which it is based and was astounded at the similarity between the dialogue of the book and the apparent improvised dialogue of the film. It seems that Loach's technique is to acquaint his cast with the script and then shoot the sequence "in their own words"--after seven or eight takes, he agreed with a wry smile, they generally use the words which the script first suggested.

POOR COW (1967)

Ken Loach's first film for the cinema, POOR COW, deals with the emotional and social struggles of one woman, Joy. She marries while in her late teens, gives birth to a son (which brings her companionship, as her ties with her husband are merely sexual and material), her husband is imprisoned as the result of a bungled robbery, and she falls in love with another criminal who is similarly imprisoned. It deals with her struggle on a day-to-day basis, selecting, in a quasi-documentary fashion, scenes over a three-year period of her life.

This life conspires to seek two things--wealth and love--and, in her search for these, sexuality is seen as a means to both, as well as a relief and diversion when neither is immediately attainable. Loach goes out of his way to show us mundanity, through the social realism of his London locations and his dialogue. This mundanity is transcended on two levels: by pointedly universalistic themes of life, love, motherhood, etc.; and by the romantic attitudes of Joy, whose occasional narration pushes the film away from realism into lyrical escape.

In parts this lyricism (be it Joy's or Loach's) goes too far and pushes the film to an awkward compromise between cinema verite and silver-screen indulgence. Chris Menges' excellent photography (and it is even better in KES) unfortunately glamorizes rather than reflects; alienation devices such as titled headings or comments between sequences become a little glib; an angelic Donovan singing Christopher Logue's otherwise pertinent title song ultimately detracts from it; the working class culture the film portrays is rather sensationalized; stars such as Terrence Stamp and Carol White are unconvincing and uninteresting in their attempts to be ordinary people: these all pull the film in two contrary and confused directions. The excitement which Loach attempted to put into his image is ill-conceived and detracts from its subject-matter.

Nevertheless, the film is by no means a complete failure. Partly its naivety and lyricism can be explained, I feel, by the narrative stance often given to Joy. She is naive, she does romanticize an environment that might strike others with despondency or introspection--in short, she "makes the best of things." To this extent the film makes an interesting attempt to oscillate between Joy's mind and that of a third-person narrator--in the style of Nell Dunn's novel upon which it is based. In fact, in writing the screenplay Loach and Dunn may have too literally transcribed features of the novel that appear indiscriminate in the way they finally work on the screen.

The film is full of the popular culture in which the principal characters surround themsleves. "What a day for a daydream..." and evocations of San Franciscans with flowers in their hair play over the squalor of the housing conditions in East London, and while this achieves some analysis through paradox, it is a little too simplistic and fails to articulate the more urgent reasons why certain sections of our community have to live this way.

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In POOR COW Loach compromised himself to commercial sensation in a manner that his previous and subsequent work seldom has. He admits there is much he would like to put in his work which is tempered by the ultimate need to get his films shown, if he is to speak to an audience at all, and POOR COW well shows him in a state of confusion about what he wants to do.

KES (1969)

Based on a novel by Barry Hines entitled *A Kestrel for a Knave* (the book's title refers to the only hunting-bird the lowest social orders were allowed to keep), KES is the story of a fifteen-year-old boy, Billy Casper, during the last weeks of his secondary school career. The school experience offers him nothing and soon he will be unwillingly drawn into the coal mining industry upon which his local northern England town, Barnsley, is based. Home offers him equally little, with an indifferent mother who, deserted by her husband, is out each night with a different man, and a half-brother, Jud, himself a miner, who bullies Billy into submission at his every whim.

Billy finds a young kestrel which he patiently trains and in which his life becomes absorbed. In a rage at Billy, Jud kills the bird in revenge.

Shot entirely on location, its actors, with one exception, are local townspeople and club entertainers. This realism gives the film Loach's documentary edge and, indeed, many of its actors are cast in their real life roles of teacher, headmaster, librarian or school-kid. While the film concerns itself ostensibly with the central character of Billy, I think it fully meets the demands of someone like Flaherty that "a story must come out of the life of a people, not from the actions of individuals," both through the representativeness of Billy's experiences and through the rich and detailed regional flavor of the film. The narrative style is one of utter simplicity, with no tricks, and the dramatic quality of the story is allowed to speak for itself.

KES resists the temptation of being some sort of mere "nature" film with swirling and impressive shots of the hawk dominating the screen. The hawk is always shown in relation to the boy, and the boy in relation to his unequivocal, wider environment. For example, the sequences we see of Billy training the hawk on the green slopes behind his home are always framed to include the grey, smoky, industrial town as a constant reminder of its presence in Billy's world. There is also a powerful sequence where Billy, on his early morning paper route, sits down to read through a kid's comic he is to deliver. The boy, absorbed within the fantastic omnipotence and resilience of Desperate Dan, the comic hero, is not conscious at that moment of the churning coal mine beyond, and of his own vulnerability.

The impotent atmosphere of the school, which utterly fails to touch Billy's imagination, is contrasted to the compelling world of the boy's experiences with the kestrel. Billy's inability to concentrate on the tasks externally set at school or home is contrasted with the intense and prolonged absorption in the training of the kestrel. Billy is one of the large number of children whom the British education system regard as ineducable and whose secondary school career is largely a matter of turning up at school and fitting into the institutional structure of behavior. Consequently, students and teachers, caught alike in this structure, seldom come together in any personal exchange. And then, when these children are sixteen, they are fed into the industrial machine.

A key scene in KES involves Billy's interview with the Youth Employment Officer. Made gratuitous by both the lack of alternatives open to kids like Billy and by the incredible case-load of such an officer, allowing a matter of minutes in which each child's vocational opportunities are explored and settled, it epitomizes the non-communicative interchange between citizen and state. The interview succeeds only in overwhelming and degrading the interviewee, with any control, through language and ultimate power, entirely beyond his reach. Billy's thoughts can't focus on the mystical jargon of his interviewer's concern, except to say, "I wouldn't be seen dead down pit"--the interviewer in turn takes such a future for granted and begins to talk in terms of superannuation, graduated contributions and pensions. In each of his feature films Loach has exploited the interview situation, to explore the communication between ordinary people and authority, and these scenes exemplify his acute ear for dialogue.

The character of Billy is played superbly by David Bradley, himself a fifteen-year-old in a similar situation, and every scene at which he is at the center works with compelling persuasion and power. Visually his scant and grubby body, scruffy and lacking care, and his tired eyes, contrast stunningly with the close-ups of the kestrel in his keeping. One sympathizes with him completely through the understanding he brings to the role, although he retains throughout a cold unsentimental edge, and even the most unfortunate of his encounters with an insensitive world are touched with absurdity.

As Loach himself has said, "KES proved our real thesis--that there's a lot of ability that nobody knows about that just gets written off. David Bradley's talent justifies the making of the film: he proves the validity of the assumption behind it... We didn't happen to unearth one child star, there were several kids in that one school who could have done the main part."

The film's humor works both through its irony and its sheer accuracy of detail, with all but the last scene of the film, seeing at once the serious and funny side of the facts it portrays. One sequence, of a school soccer lesson, is among the funniest I have seen in any movie. It, nevertheless, has weak moments such, for example, as one sequence in a working-men's club, which is over-long and superficial; and one scene of Jud beginning a day's work at the pit, which though necessary to the overall portrayal of Billy's world, seems poorly conceived except for the over-dubbed soundtrack of the school's religious assembly running simultaneously and emphasizing the recurrent "cage" image of both pit and school. Billy's freedom from any of these cages can only be through momentary diversion.

FAMILY LIFE (1971)--initially released in the U.S. under the distributor's title of WEDNESDAY's CHILD.

The theme of the individual's imaginative repression and lack of autonomy, explored in KES, becomes the pivotal notion in FAMILY LIFE. Written by David Mercer, it is a remake of a television film he, Loach and Garnett had collaborated on five years earlier. There is no doubt it is Loach's most accomplished film and stands high against any film made in Britain in the 1970's.

The film is overwhelmingly harrowing and pessimistic in its immediate impact, following an unspecified period of months during which its central character, Janice Baildon, deteriorates from being an attractive nineteen-year-old, helplessly estranged from parental expectations, to a physically and mentally wrecked mute, institutionalized with no immediate prospect of recovery. The final sequence of the film takes place in a lecture hall where Janice is brought in to illustrate a lecture being given to a class of medical students. The senior doctor, white-coated, stands at the front of the hall:

> Well, in order to illustrate some of the things we have been talking about, I have brought along a young girl...in many ways a very typical case history. From a reasonably happy background--comfortable home...happy childhood...no sign of any sort of disturbance until her late teens ...Then in and out of various jobs for a while. Her case notes here include thought-blocking...over-inclusion...emotional apathy...automatic obedience. As far as we know there's no discernable connection between the various symptoms and her environment. Now I'll have her in. Staff Nurse--come in.
>
> Come on Janice. Sit down. That's right, sit. Good morning? Janice. How are you this morning? You notice she doesn't reply. This is a good example of extreme mutism. I think the clinical picture is a fairly clear one, and the--er--present condition of the patient, what you might call a...logical expectation given the case history. Now...Any questions?

This short, telling sequence ends the film abruptly, stressing the need for serious and urgent inquiry and showing the complacent, unfeeling approach which typifies the treatment of psychiatric illness. It is worth quoting in full because it is the final dialectical blow thrown by the film, and is diametrically opposed to the arguments that the previous hundred minutes of the film so relentlessly press. The film sets out to evince unequivocably that Janice's symptoms bear a very discernable connection with her environment, and that the traditional diagnosis and treatment of such symptoms is illogical, myopic, and barbaric.

The "comfortable home" which the doctor speaks of is seen in the film to be comfortable only in the contect of suburban conformity and sameness. The "happy childhood" of which he speaks is shown to be dominated by repressive parental inhibitions. At all stages of her existence Janice adheres to conventional expectations rather than personal inclinations. The ensuing and complete loss of self-respect results in severe mental detachment.

The film provides the background to what *it* clearly sees as the causes of her problems and shows the treatment she receives from the medical profession--firstly through a progressive group therapist with

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whose help she seems to be gaining a gradual sense of her own identity, but later, when this doctor's contract is terminated by the hospital in favor of more traditional and "effective" techniques, she is given electro-convulsive therapy and drugs.

Many of the sequences of the film are too elliptical to be conventionally assimilated as narrative, and a plot summary would be trite in respect of the powerful cinema verite atmosphere which Loach achieves. Once again, his cast, either inexperienced, or inexperienced in film, are with very few exceptions superb. Grace Cave and Bill Dean, as the parents, bring a tremendous force to the screen, and though villains in the larger sense, Cave particularly, Loach told me, felt every nuance of the well-meaningness that she puts into her role. Even more impressive is Sandy Ratcliff, as Janice, who in her first, and, I think, only acting role gives a performance as perfect as it is disturbing.

The film's ending is pessimistic to the extreme--a virtual emotional holocaust--and this pessimism might possibly detract from the task of analysis which the film appears to set for itself and its audience. In deciding the extent of his film's emotional impact, Loach had to reconcile two areas of concern: the utterly convincing disintegration of a human life, if his audience were to appreciate the possible impact of mental illness; and, secondly, an analysis of that which causes and that which antagonizes such "illness." Its final sequence identifies, as I have said, the attitude of the British health service as responsible for Janice's ultimate plight, and, as the last image you see, the callousness of the doctor remains intact. The balme for the root cause of Janice's "illness" is placed rather generally in the lap of "the system." The enunciated normality of Janice's background, the suburban nuclear family, which created the roles and conditions which have stifled and destroyed her individuality, is poignantly expressed; but once again Loach chooses to make his condemnation in an implicit fashion, allowing the audience itself to articulate any explicit analysis. The assertion that most people can make that analysis seems in part to be contradicted by the portrayal of Mr. and Mrs. Average (i.e., Janice's parents) as unable to see beyond the implications of their "normal" behavior. And yet Loach seems prepared to accept that the same average folks, in the context of a cinema audience, will be able to see beyond their habitual assertions. Alternatives for the medical treatment of Janice's problems are clearly offered, but no alternatives to the nuclear family in an industrial society are discussed at all. Such a lack of discussed alternatives is greatly responsible for the pessimistic impression the film leaves. One can only speculate as to whether Loach is intentionally pessimistic in his failure to discuss alternatives.

While both POOR COW and FAMILY LIFE contain a lot of improvised dialogue, and both to significant effect, there is a tentativeness about FAMILY LIFE which makes the dialogue less tidy, less equivocal in suggestion--more realistic. Much of the dialogue emerges in interview situations where the speaker is conspicuously aware of audience, which in itself provides a more energetic sense of "performance." The seemingly unpolished editing--with long takes, insistently undramatic fades, etc.--similarly adds a spontaneity to the film--a spontaneity that in a way suggests discovery. In this respect I think it is less than satisfactory that the film is so overstated in deference to the point which it wishes to make, for its case could be more conclusive if it were a little less pushed in one direction. On some of the film's issues Loach shows both sides of the argument, but overall its overstatement of the Laingian school of thought detracts from the film's realism and honesty. Though, nevertheless, it stands as a convincing condemnation of the British health service's attitude to psychiatric treatment and cure.

* * *

Although Loach has made merely three films for the cinema, and the last of these five years ago, his achievements are considerable. KES and FAMILY LIFE have been variously, though by no means unanimously, acclaimed as masterpieces, and as television director he has engaged an artistic reputation uncommon to that medium. The present, four-film DAYS OF HOPE project for the BBC represents three years' work for him and Garnett and its screening this autumn should consolidate their achievements and hopefully give them capital enough to work in the cinema again if that is what they want.

By canvassing and conveying the life and opinion of the working class, Loach and Garnett have narrowed the gap between those who make and those who watch films. Equally they have narrowed distinctions between cineaste and popular audiences. Their revolutionary impulse is too emphatic for some audiences, and too slight for others: ultimately they may never speak directly to all people, but they are certainly making contact. □

Tony Garnett and Ken Loach Interview

FAMILY LIFE IN THE MAKING

JUMP CUT would like to thank the Editorial Collective of *7 Days*, a radical English weekly which appeared in 1971-72, for their permission to reprint this conversation with Tony Garnett and Ken Loach from their issue of January 12, 1972. Talking to Garnett and Loach are several members of the *7 Days* Editorial Collective.

--Anthony Barnett, John McGrath,
John Mathews, and Peter Wollen

JM: How did you come to make FAMILY LIFE?

TG: Well actually it goes back to when I was at university--at University College, London--reading psychology in a desultory way--being taught about rats in mazes, Skinner boxes, and things like that. Then I came across Erving Goffman--a book called *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, which just knocked me over. I started to read in areas of psychology which weren't broached at all in the academic world. They weren't considered to be "tough-minded" in the William James sense. Then I struck up a friendship with David Mercer whose own reading had gone through all these changes as well, and then meeting Ronnie Laing, and talking to him, and then it call came together.

JM: What about the actual story line--did you take a case history as your material?

TG: Well, it's a bit like CATHY really. You can say that all those things really happened to various people, but we couldn't point to one person that they all happened to.

PW: How many of you discussed the film?

TG: At that stage it's David Mercer, Ken and me. And then a bit later Mike Riddall was very helpful. He played the progressive psychiatrist in FAMILY LIFE but he's not an actor; he is a progressive psychiatrist.

JM: How did you come across him?

TG: David had done a draft. One of the things which didn't quite work was the business of the doctor being sacked--which has happened to a number of psychiatrists we know who were working in the NHS. It's very difficult to script. We got permission from Equity to work with someone who wasn't an actor, with people who had had quite long careers as schizophrenics. So we went to Duncan Road, and asked people like Leon Redler, Mike Yokum--they're part of the Philadelphia Association--to help. Since Kingsley Hall closed, they've been attempting to create "asylums," in the best sense, in houses--there's one in North London--where people who have had long and awful experiences in bins can just "be." It's a way of not having to go back into a bin when you're still at a stage when you can't quite cope with the rigors of the outside world. We met a therapist called Ben Churchill, through him we talked to Mike Riddall.

KL: And he was fresh from the experience of working in a NHS hospital, where he had to cope with problems on a very large scale. This was just what we were looking for....And he made a very real contribution ....He could say: "It's not like this--this is how it is"...he was one of the touchstones of reality. Not that he's to blame for any of the mistakes. But if you're filming an interview, then he can say that this is false, and we can change it. That was his major contribution.

The main difficulty was in bringing the three people together--the mother, the father, the daughter--who aren't in fact a family, and if they had been, probably wouldn't have been a schizogenic family, i.e., one which creates schizophrenics. The difficulty was making them appear as if they would be a schizogenic family, while they used their personalities, that is those parts of which could have produced a child who had difficulty in establishing her own identity. Getting that balancing act was difficult. People veer into other aspects of their personality which would have provided the girl with a way out. Billy Dean played the father, and is a much more open and generous bloke than he appears in the film. The problem was to stop him showing too much of that, while at the same time not letting him pretend to be someone he wasn't.

You're constantly trying to create a situation in which they're off balance, so that their own reactions are the ones which come through. It's a matter of finding those reactions which are genuine to them, which in the context of the film and script add up to a schizogenic family.

PW: That must have meant a lot of care in the casting.

KL: Yes,if you can find the right people, then it will go. That's the biggest hurdle.

JMG: Do you see the theoretical richness and ideas in the film as the content, and the realization through this particular way of doing it as constituting a form? Would you accept that as a valid distinction to start with?

TG: When something works as a whole, you can't split it up. It's a unit. The content and form--what it's about and how it manifests itself--are the same thing. When it comes a cropper, they're not the same. There's an artificial, a mechanical relationship between them.

PW: In a more general way, there are two important problems about FAMILY LIFE that I'd like your response to. One, you seem to begin with the theoretical ideas, which are general, and then move into the particular. That always has the effect, for me, of zooming in, or zeroing in, of going down a funnel, until at the end you reach a dead point. I think that comes out, as a result of the preconception you have of what you're doing--which I wasn't completely happy about in FAMILY LIFE. By making it these particular people, and by making it so perfectly realistic, in the end it either becomes just those particular people, and you lose sight of the general, theoretical points which were what you started with. Or they are seen as representatives, in which case the theory becomes too simplfied; it seems as if you're saying all families are just like this.

The other thing is the point about content and form. I'd argue what is a more Brechtian point of view, that there should be gaps and rifts between the content and the form which set up gaps and rifts in people's minds. Far from the film being closed and continuous, there should be discontinuities, disclosures which go on operating in people's minds afterwards.

KL: I tend to see it as the inverse of what you're saying....It's possible from observing individuals reacting on one another to make some generalized statement, and that in fact you're looking through the other end of the telescope.

PW: You can look at it either way: either you can say they're all like that, or this one is special. And neither of those alternatives is presumably what you want to say.

JMG: It seems to be a question of the limits of naturalism. I've seen most of what you've done, and at times you've broken from naturalism very clearly. When we worked together in television, and before that in the theater, you were notoriously non-naturalistic, or anti-naturalistic, in your approach, particularly in the theater, but also in *Diary of a Young Man*. But of late you seem to have been getting closer into a naturalistic vein.

KL: Yes, I think that's true....We're just trying to make films to reflect people in situations as accurately as possible. Most other communications you read or see or experience seem so totally inaccurate. We've tried to say: "Well look, this is how it is" in a way which ordinary people can appreciate, so they can glean some perspective. We've tried not to make it an indiscriminate naturalism, and by the juxtaposition of different naturalistic sequences--to make the comment there. So that's why we veered towards that sort of thing.

JMG: How do you relate this to a consciously political approach?

KL: It's what you tend to make films about. One thing which I think has been central to the films which we've done has been to try to make films for the class which we think is the only politically important class--the working class--and therefore not to make elitist films, or *cineaste* films, but to make films which can be understood by ordinary people.

JMG: Does it necessarily have to be naturalistic for a working class audience?

KL: No, I'm sure you can make films which are unnaturalistic in the way the sequences are juxtaposed, but if people can see a situation and say: Yes, I recognize that, I recognize those people, that's true of me, or that's true of someone I know, then you've made a basic contact. If it's a film about an industrial situation, it's very important that everybody in the film is accurate so the people seeing it recognize their own fellow factory workers. It's also very important that you can follow what's going on--the story line. Given that, it's hard to avoid going towards a film that looks naturalistic.

JM: But do you agree that there's a problem here? If your political and cinematic purposes are naturalism, and you present the events on the screen as if they were real life, then compounded with Peter's funnelling effect won't you end up with a form of pessimism?

TG: Why do you end up with pessimism?

JM: FAMILY LIFE seems to be obstructed by the lack of an underlying dialectic connecting the family with the wider society; it was isolated. This lack of dialectical connection would seem to end up in pessimism.

TG: I think there might be some justice in that. If you start off with some basic political assumptions--which we needn't go into--then there are lots of ways of filming that theme.

PW: You mentioned Kingsley Hall, and these follow-up places. Did you think of mentioning these in the film?

KL: I don't think those facilities would be available for most of the people confronted by that situation. The idea that there can be any optimism gleaned from within the way we treat mentally ill people now, would be false. To say "The whole system is terrible, but hang on folks, there is a chink here." It would be as false as saying: "Couldn't Billy Kes be got a job in a zoo?" It's not on.

PW: So you're saying, if it's to be opened up, it has to be by politicizing it more?

KL: It would have to be by making what we felt was implicit, explicit, yes.

JMG: But this is precisely the limit of naturalism.

PW: It may be the limit also of wanting to go for the mass audience.

AB: What do you mean by the limit of naturalism?

JMG: What Ken has implied. It is impossible to show, in a naturalistic form, the way out of an apparently closed situation. Precisely to have a dialectical relationship to the subject, you need an extra dimension.

KL: That's a very valid point. We have been involved in films which were more overtly political in the methods used which we hope have been showing the optimism more clearly. But you can't make that film every time. You can't just take a political attitude and state that in the films over and over again, trotting out the message each time--the commercial at the end.

JMG: Peter made a point that I don't think I agree with that a mass audience means having naturalistic forms.

PW: It's not a question of the audience itself resisting, but within the conditions of production, distribution and exhibition in which the cinema industry works, it can be a limit. Take, say, Godard, who is always accused of being elitist, a phrase Ken used, it comes from the fact that the films he wants to make are no longer distributable, within the system. How far can you go within the system? Is it right to break from it and go outside it? Those were the questions I'm trying to raise. I think it is right to make films for a working class audience but that brings you back to the distributors.

TG: It is certainly true that in the cinema in this country only a narrow range of subjects, and ways of treating them, are acceptable. So of all the films that one wants to make, and all the ways one wants to make them, only a fraction could ever be done.

KL: One tries to take into account the level of consciousness of the people who are going to see it, and their expectations. While not pandering one starts from there to lead people to certain conclusions, given that when people go to the cinema they are expecting what they have been led to expect. One doesn't want to put a barrier between you and them by adopting a form they will react against.

JMG: There are two things--how far do you think the working class is wedded to that particular form and how much do you have to conform to the industry's idea of a movie? On the first, in television, where you've done a lot of work, Ken, do you find that the working class response diminished with the amount of adventurousness you put into it? THE BIG FLAME, for example, was certainly adventurous.

KL: It was very naturalistic.

JMG: It wasn't an intimate psycho-drama. And the people in it were constantly pushing against the form.

KL: Well yes, obviously the biggest response we've had to any film was CATHY COME HOME. This was because people identified with the family, not because we put up statistics about homelessness on the screen.

JMG: But BIG FLAME did have a built-in alienating device in the documentary way it was set in an industrial conflict, it gave it an objectivity; you were always aware that a class issue was at stake, not just the "problems of these particular men," and the same is true of CATHY COME HOME, the documentary realism and the devices in the context of a television play broke the funnelling effect.

TG: It also had a big response because it made people comfortably uncomfortable. They felt worthy to be moved having sat through it. So two bob for Shelter and that is alright, without putting any really difficult political thought into it. The thing to show, which we didn't do, was to show some relationship between that family and the necessity to nationalize the land, and, and, and, and; right? It should work on all of those levels so that it is the most natural thing in the world for those things to link up. If you can do a piece like that, that is the way to do it, and we didn't.

PW: The problem is how to politicize a film without just tacking on a message.

AB: How does the absence of a large-scale political movement against the present set-up affect your making films?

KL: It's the context in which we are.

TC: It's us, isn't it? We are part of the English tradition struggling for some Marxism, we're not separate from it. It would be dead easy to take an easy way out of it. That would be mechanical. The reduction of it would be one film of a thick-thighed girl riding astride a tractor shouting "Bread, Land, and Peace." The safety of that is marvellous. It's like that awful word in politics about being "correct," it's a kind of Stalinist death that is, in politics, it means people are not daring, risking, not putting their imagination into their political thought and work, all they are doing is avoiding criticism by taking the "correct" line. This is true in making films. I mean "correct" used in that discussion, not that one shouldn't argue for a position.

JMG: There is far more work in the theater that has been done on this which one can draw on, also the theater is related to circus and show business, you can use so many more devices in the theater, and the theater is much more related to having a direct effect on an audience, which is a political involvement. In the cinema it is a kind of "thing," a screen with images effecting a much more passive audience, with the makers thousands of miles away. There is an element of truth in what you say about naturalism and the working class audience. Actually photographing people, everybody mentally checks whether the character is natural in a way that they don't in the theater. There just isn't a tradition of devices in the cinema that relate to having a direct effect on an audience. One thing you mentioned, the juxtaposition of naturalistic scenes, can have an effect by rubbing things together, you did a lot of telly placing voice-over. But there is a very limited range of equipment at your disposal in the cinema at the moment.

PW: The two are very different. The amount of investment required for a start. John can tour on a comparatively small investment experimentally, also he can confront an audience which, whatever it is doesn't have the social composition of the West End audiences; and theater is like that, and nobody thinks that it should be reaching a gigantic mass audience. When you come to the cinema you frequently hear the reproach against lots of directors, that they don't reach a gigantic audience, that they're

running away from it. In the theater you accept that you are only going to have so many dozens of people there at a time.

KL: I'm not sure they do accept that. A lot of the people who have moved out from the West End are going to theater they want to be a popular experience.

PW: Popular is different from mass, that's where the thing about the screen is important. The theater, even with a little audience, can be a popular experience. The cinema doesn't work that way.

On the way here John was saying that 7/84 had follow-up discussions after performances, could that be done with films?

JMG: There are special films, like educational ones, which are designed to be discussed.

PW: Have you ever shown films like that?

TG: We go whenever we can. That's the dream, that you can do a film that will help to prise open the issue, for everybody else to get amongst it. That's a smashing thing for a film to do. We'll be going up to Newcastle when it opens there.

KL: Let's hope some of the people there are from the local bins.

AL: What kind of response did you get when IN TWO MINDS was shown on television?

TG: The letters divided fifty percent saying "Oh, the poor parents, with a girl like that, what a terrible time they had." The other half said "The poor girl, with parents like that, no wonder she went mad." Both of which were failures from our point of view, because if you make those kind of moral judgments when you're ceasing to understand the predicament.

JM: Are you going to aim for more for television again now?

KL: It's a bit hand-to-mouth, you never know what you're going to get the money for.

TG: I've just signed a new contract with the BBC for two years. The idea is to spend half the time with telly and half with cinema, if we can get the money.

JM: What sort of projects?

TG: There's a few things cooking; it's bad luck to talk about them (laughter). There are one or two historical subjects, fairly recent history, because the working class have no history, they haven't been allowed to have history, it's been taken away from them, it's important to do something about that.

AB: What is the structure of Kestrel Productions; how do you go about making films as an independent organization?

TG: What happens, is you go to Nat Cohen, or whoever, one of the distributors, with a script and a detailed budget and ask for the money.

JMG: Others go along with a star as well.

TG: True, we're only talking about us. Some people start with a poster (silence). It's true, there is a man at Hammer who says that he starts with a poster and then works backwards (laughter).

It's amazing you know, we get letters every day to the personnel manager. Kestrel is Janet in the office. That's it, unless we are actually shooting, when there are sixty people working one way or another, otherwise it's Janet. What happened with FAMILY LIFE, we were very lucky, it was just before the National Film Finance Corporation got into terrible trouble and they had a bit of money and they financed the script, then they put 50% of the money up for the film, and Nat Cohen of Tango-EMI put up the other 50%. The film cost 175 pounds. How else can you make films?

JMG: And now the NFFC can't put up the front money for scripts.

TG: We're in trouble--trying to get new things going will be very difficult. The NFFC has been the only civilizing influence on British FIlms. We wouldn't have survived without it.

AB: Have you lost money on all your films?

KL: On balance our ventures into feature films would show quite a healthy profit.

TG: We haven't seen any of it.

JMG: Will your record make it easier for you to raise some money commercially?

TG: Not really. Take KES. Once it started to do well, if we'd wanted to do a film about a girl and a sparrow we could have got the money (laughter). But who wants to do that?

AB: What happens if a film starts to make money, do you see the money?

TG: Look, Anthony, very simply, what happens is that all of the money that is paid into the box office roughly a third goes back to the distributor and two-thirds is kept by the exhibitor. On that third he then takes off around 25 to 30% as his expenses, of the rest he then charges publicity, advertising and the cost of making prints.

KL: Those aren't his expenses!

TG: Of the remainder of that he starts to pay off the cost of making the film prior to the negative. Then of course there is all the cost of the interest on the money which has been borrowed to make the film and which has accumulated over the months, then when all that has been paid off it is called "going into profit" (laughter) and of that you *may* have a percentage.

PW: It's like in Persia when the Shah would give the Minister the money, he'd keep what he felt was right, he'd give the rest to the deputies and they'd keep what they felt was right, and so on; it filters down gradually until it gets to the end of the chain, if there's any left.

AB: The situation is scandalous.

TG: No, it's just called capitalism. That's how it is. □

CINEMA NOVO

Pitfalls of Cultural Nationalism

-- Hans Proppe and Susan Tarr

The "discovery" and elucidation of a national culture in the *cinema novo* of Brazil is a progressive step forward from the deformed and plastic imitations of Hollywood film which preceded it. However, cinema novo, exciting, dynamic and progressive as it is, has internal limitations that some audiences and critics are unwilling to grapple with.

Just as political consciousness develops dialectically from one stage to progressively higher stages, the art or cultural artifacts produced will correspond to these stages of development and reflect material reality. It is important to be able to distinguish these stages and, while encouraging all steps forward in this developmental process, not to give premature total approbation to the more primitive and limited stages. In the case of European and American audiences, cinema novo has received accolades and political laurels in which the enthusiasm is based more on a well-intentioned cultural paternalism than on constructive political criticism. In the area of political films, this attitude is by no means limited to evaluations of the cinema novo. It is symptomatic of a difficulty that arises when a film is exported and viewed-interpreted by people without a real knowledge of the fundamentals of the national context.

Godard's films, intended for the organized political cadre of France, are denounced by unorganized students in the U.S. A film designed for organized Peronist workers and militants is mistakenly hailed by Godard as a "Latin American POTEMKIN." The same film is equally mistakenly denounced by certain American audiences as being "Peronist propaganda" and therefore fascist. In political struggle as well as in cultural struggle, tactics and strategy must be evaluated from the perspective of the concrete historical circumstances from which they derived. Such is the case with cinema novo.

Numerous claims have been made by advocates of cinema novo and particularly by Glauber Rocha as to the revolutionary intention and effect of this body of work. When Rocha, a prolific writer and influential film theoretician, makes such contradictory claims as that cinema novo wants to "make a contribution to the revolution" and that he does not "believe that we will arrive at that state by educating the people" because "the film, after all, is a game like sports...a stimulant like drugs", it becomes necessary to take a critical look at cinema novo, specifically the films of Rocha.

It will be argued here that the symbolism and metaphor upon which cinema novo relies so heavily, rather than clarifying the audiences's experience, serves to further mystify and perhaps even exacerbate a painful reality. Principally at issue is whether or not the three recurrent themes and protagonists of cinema novo, the bandit cangaceiros, the fanatical mystics and the all-pervasive peasant suffering have been utilized in such a way as to raise political consciousness and elucidate the situation. Similarly, notwithstanding the stated intention of the cinema novo filmmakers to obscure political meanings in order to avoid censorship and repression, the political ambiguity of many of these films is as much a function of a mistaken political analysis as anything else. In addition, the unique visual aspects of cinema novo can be viewed as attempts to establish a film style which emphasizes the aesthetic rather than the political.

Since most of the best known cinema novo films deal with the social conditions of the Northeast of Brazil, we must first examine that area and its extreme culture and way of life.

OF CANGACEIROS. SANTOS AND SERTANEJOS

The Northeast can be divided into two general regions--the eastern coastal area extending 30 to 40 miles inland and rich in vegetation and the western interior, the *sertao*, an arid desert periodically subject to droughts in which as much as a third of the population of the area die. In the early centuries of Portugese rule, it was the Northeast coastal region that determined the destiny of Brazil as it was the seat of colonial rule. The eastern area is dominated by large landholdings and sugar cane plantations (the *engenhos*) while the sertao is dominated by cattle-raising interests (the *fazenda*). The rise of the engenhos resulted in feudal social relationships, including the importation of slaves from Africa, and the sugar-cane monoculture destroyed the soil and prevented agrarian diversification. The social and productive relationships of the sertao region have been described as most closely resembling a form of primitive capitalism, with a large, desperate and unorganized labor force creating a free-labor situation exploited by the rulers of the cattle empires. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and coinciding with the overthrow of the monarchy in 1889, the locus of Brazilian power began a shift to the south. Competition from Cuba in the area of sugar production and the rise of coffee, grown primarily in the south, as the nation's most important export were the primary factors in determining this shift. Meanwhile, an emerging and more modernized sugar industry began to grow up in the south as well and these producers were soon producing sugar at lower prices than the producers of the Northeast. At the close of World War II, world sugar prices rose steeply and a number of plantation owners who had left their property returned with the intention of cashing in on the new demand for their product. Their efforts to expel the peasants who had taken over small plots and were raising subsistence crops resulted in the first Peasant League formations.

The sertao has historically been a great disaster area. In addition to severe droughts, heavy rains contribute to flash floods that frequently wipe out entire settlements along the river-banks. The inhabitants of the sertao originally included runaway and freed slaves as well as the Negro-Portugese, Portugese-Indian

and Indian-Negro mixtures common in the area. The *sertanejo* or "backlander" clings tenaciously to this area that appears ill-suited to human habitation. While the devastating droughts that take such a toll can be seen as simply a curse of nature, the anachronistic relationship of landowners to peasants is the real clue to the misery of the Northeast. The cinema novo filmmakers frequently focus on the effects of this exploitative relationship, on the aberrative social/psychological phenomena that result, and less on the explicit nature of the relationship itself.

Josue de Castro in *Death in the Northeast* describes the psychic rhythms which appear during periods of famine as being schizoid, where the polar temperaments become the outlaw-bandit *cangaceiros* of the mystical and fanatic *santos* or visionaries"

> "Activated by drought and famine, both saints and bandits arise, and both types can be merged in the same personality. Such a phenomenon was the celebrated fratracide Bento da Cruz de Joazeiro, who 'with a cross in one hand and a dagger in the other', meted out justice in his village... We may think of the cangaceiro, or bandit,

as a personality in which the baser impulses released by hunger have won the upper hand over normal restraints. The religious fanatic, on the other hand, represents a victory of the abnormal exaltations of hunger. He is a man who has beat a retreat into the metaphysical. But both forms of escape--towards brute force or the metaphysical illusion--are distortions from which no good comes." (p. 61)

The periodic rise of religious fanaticism in the Northeast seems attributable as well to the combination of isolation, misery and frustration that is exploited by a charismatic religious leader relying heavily on the traditionally mystical religious elements, a combination of Catholicism and African relgious ceremony called *macumba*. From Portugal came another ingredient, a popular quasi-religious belief system known as Sebastianism, which prophecied the return of the Portugese king Sebastian who vanished in Africa in 1578 while fighting the Moors.

Cangaceiros, santos and sertanejos, the peasants of the sertao, are the central sources of cinema novo. VIDAS SECAS (1963); BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL (1963), ANTONIO DAS MORTES (1968); and THE GODS AND THE DEAD (1970) deal explicitly with these themes, while CINCO VEZES FAVELAS, THE GUNS (OS FUZIS), and GANGA ZUMBA (1964) have their historical reference points in these dominant sociological and psychological figures and events, while dealing with them less directly. Although the history of the Northeast is full of examples of religious rebellions stretching back into Brazilian history such as those of Joazeiro, Caldeiro and the events at Pedra Bonita in 1836 as well as the bandit activities of the cangaceiros Antonio Silvino and Rio Preto, two outstanding examples will suffice to explain the dimensions of the phenomenon, Antonio Conselheiro and Lampiao. These two are the most famous examples of the religious fanatic and the bandit of the Northeast, and references to them and the movements they spawned are prominent in the cinema novo films.

"It was natural that the deep-lying layers of our ethnic stratification should have cast up so extraordinary an anticlinal as Antonio Conselheiro" is the opening line of Euclides da Cunha's description of the religious fanatic who led a millenarian movement at the turn of the century. Antonio Vicente Mendes Maciel, or Conselheiro as he came to be known, was indeed a natural outcome of the physical and psychological forces which interact in the sertao. Da Cunha, in *Rebellion in the Backlands*, a remarkable account of the Conselheiro-led rebellion at Canudos in 1897, states that Conselheiro "was doing no more than to condense the obscurantism of the three separate races (sic)" which he categorizes as the "anthropomorphism of the savage" or the Brazilian Indian, the "animism of the African slaves" and the "historical atavism" of the mestizo. Wandering through the backlands of the Northeast in the 1880's for more than ten years, Conseilheiro gathered a large following as a mystic and ascetic amalgamating Roman Catholicism, African religious belief and indigenous mysticism. This amalgam developed into a millenarian movement like that Europe had seen centuries earlier. Like its predecessor this movement had three main characteristics: 1. "A profound and total rejection of the present evil world, and a passionate longing for another and better one..." 2. "A fairly standardized 'ideology' of the chiliastic type" (the return of Christ or a savior like Sebastian), 3. "...a fundamental vagueness about the actual way in which the new society will be brought about." (from Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, pp. 57-58).

As a wandering prophet and pietist longing for the promised kingdom of God which Conselheiro felt had been subverted and abandoned by the orthodox church, he preached against both the established church and the newly-established republic. In 1882, the Catholic archbishop of Baia, alarmed at the large following Conselheiro was attracting, instructed his pastors as follows:

"It having come to our knowledge that, in the central parishes of this archbishopric, there is a certain individual by the name of Antonio Conselheiro who goes about preaching to the people who come to hear his superstitious doctrines and an excessively rigid morality, thereby disturbing consciences and weakening in no small degree the authority of the priests in these places we ordain that your Reverence shall not consent to any such abuse in his parish, but shall let it be known to his parishoners that we absolutely forbid their congregating to hear such preachings. Seeing that in the Catholic Church the holy mission of indoctrinating the people belongs only to the ministers of religion, it follows that a layman, whoever he may be and however well instructed and virtuous, does not have the authority to exercise that right."

(Da Cunha, *Rebellion in the Backlands*, p. 137)

Conselheiro made no great distinction between the Church and the State, branding the republic as the instrument of the "Anti-Christ" and "a supreme heresy". Citing the return of Dom Sebatiao (King Sebastain), Conselheiro prophesized "...and on that day when he and his small army shall arise, then shall he with the edge of the sword free all from the yoke of this Republic...". After a number of confrontations with representatives of the government and the Catholic Church, Conselheiro and his followers retreated to a small town, Canudos, to establish a religious settlement which eventually grew to a population of three thousand. For the most part, those who flocked to Canudos were destitute peasant families. Also numbered among the settlers were a large group of cangaceiros, hardened and desperate bandit-outlaws, well-schooled in the use of weapons and techniques of survival in the inhospitable backlands. Prior to 1897, several expeditions of Army troops sent against the settlement were completely unsuccessful against the fortified town and the fierce dedication of the inhabitants of Canudos. Finally, in 1897, a new Army expedition was organized involving thousands of well-armed soldiers who proceeded to wipe out the town and kill every man, woman and child in Canudos.

If the millenarian movement of Conselheiro seems anachronistic coming at the turn of the century, the most recent and popular of the cangaceiros, Lampiao, who led a movement in the 1930's, indicates the nature of more contemporary developments in the Brazilian hinterlands. Virgulino Ferreira da Silva, known as "the Captain" or Lampiao, is perhaps the most popular legendary hero of the sertao and a direct model for such films as ANTONIO DAS MORTES, BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL and THE GODS AND THE DEAD. Lampiao exemplifies the inherent limitations of the social bandit in regard to the alleged "revolutionary" role of such figures. The development of a contemporaneous movement in Brazil, the Prestes column, provides a useful counterpoint when considering the activities of Lampiao and his band of followers.

Eric Hobsbawm in *Bandits* discusses Lampiao's exploits and provides a political framework to clarify the phenomenon of social banditry. Hobsbawm sees the bandit as a reformer not as a revolutionary, as an activist not as ideologue or prophet from "whom novel visions or plans of social and political organization are to be expected." Rather, as champions, heroes and avengers "theirs is an individual rebellion, which is socially and politically undermined, and which under normal--ie., non-revolutionary--conditions is not a vanguard of mass revolt, but rather the product and counterpart of the general passivity of the poor. They are the exceptions which prove the rule."

Lampiao was born into a middle-class farming and cattle-raising family. More than literate, he was an excellent poet and otherwise intellectually versatile. As was the case with many other cangaceiros, a blood feud was the starting point for his banditry. When Lampiao was seventeen, his family was expelled from their farm by another family, an expulsion to which Lampiao responded by forming an outlaw band consisting of his brothers and some thirty others (including several women) in order to avenge the wrong. The realities of Lampiao's subsequent career are difficult to sort out from the countless poems, legends and songs written in tribute to him. Hobsbawm's investigation of Lampiao leads him to conclude that Lampiao was unlike other cangaceiros such as Antonio Silvino (1875-1944) who are remembered for their good deeds and concern for the poor:

"However, the ballad from which I have taken most of this account does not mention any righting of wrongs (except those done to the band itself), no taking from the rich to give to the poor, no bringing of justice...On the contrary, it records 'horrors': how Lampiao murdered a prisoner though his wife had ransomed him, how he massacred laborers, tortured an old woman who cursed him by making her dance naked with a cactus bush until she died, how he sadistically killed one of his men who had offended him by making him eat a litre of salt, and similar incidents. To be terrifying and pitiless is a more important attribute of this bandit than to be a friend of the poor."

(Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 53)

Lampiao, though a hero, was not a "good" hero. Lampiao lasted almost twenty years, not only because the rugged Northeast offered shelter from government authority but because he was able to exploit political situations and economic conditions to the extent that enabled him "to build up so strong a force as to constitute not merely a potential reinforcement for any great 'colonel' of the backwoods, but a power in his own right" (Hobsbawm, p. 80). Also revealing was the relationship of Lampiao and his band to other organized forces operating in the region at the time. In the mid-1920's, a sizeable guerrilla band which had been operating in the south-central portion of Brazil arrived in the Northeast. Led by Luis Prestes, who was later to become the leader of the Brazilian Communist Party, this well-organized and politically conscious group was seen as a serious threat to the stability of the Northeast by the ruling class. The Federal government turned for assistance to the most powerful religious figure of the area, Father Cicero, "the messiah of Ceara," with the promise of Federal troops to quell any incipient rebellion sparked by the presence of the Prestes group. At Father Cicero's urging the government attempted to enlist Lampiao's assistance by offering his band official pardon for past crimes and offering Lampiao himself official rank as captain as well as ammunition and rifles. Thus legitimized he was expected to pursue and eliminate the real social threat posed by the Prestes column. According to Hobsbawm, Lampiao's enthusiasm for his semi-official military status and his "mission" only waned when he was warned by friends that once he had eliminated Prestes and his group, his own newly-found legitimacy would quickly be revoked. Lampiao decided to take his friends' advice and retreated, mission unaccomplished to the sertao, his old sanctuary, never attempting to either pursue or join in common cause with Luis Prestes.

There have been social bandit types who have developed into activists playing a revolutionary role, Sandor Rozsa of Hungary as well as the Bolshevik Kamo are examples. The cangaceiros generally, and Lampiao specifically, never seemed to evolve out of self-serving banditry and terrorism although such a development is possible. In relation to cinema novo, which is based in such large part on the activities and context of the cangaceiros, it is important (when examining the claim of cinema novo to be a body of revolutionary film) to explore to what extent and in what ways the cinema novo deals critically with the limitations that these social forces represented.

BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL and ANTONIO DAS MORTES

What distinguishes Glauber Rocha's work is his description of his films as being political and politicizing. Rocha describes his thesis and intention this way:

The cinema is information, didactics, agitation; it has to be culture in the sense of qualitative communication, as only qualitative communication is revolutionary communication and because only this can modify fiction, with drama or with comedy, with satire or epic poetry, is only determined by different subjective or objective historical conditions: In Brazil, for example, it is easier to explain a problem to peasants using the 'cangaceiros' than using the workers. In the same way, it is easier to describe its conditions to the middle-class through a hero like Macunaima than through the 'cangaceiro'.

(From an interview with Rocha, "A Propos Political Cinema," 1971-72)

But what does Rocha communicate "qualitatively" in BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL and ANTONIO DAS MORTES? And, using his criteria, is this communication indeed revolutionary? Both films are an amalgam of the social forces of the Northeast and examine the relationships between the religious fanatics, the peasants, the *jacungos* (hired assassins) and the cangaceiros. Although not precisely intended as a sequel to BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL, ANTONIO DAS MORTES continues the development of the central character Antonio who is hired gun, bounty hunter or revolutionary, depending on which analysis is made of his actions.

Antonio, as introduced in BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL, is intended by Rocha to be simultaneously an instrument of oppression and liberation. He is a "gun for hire," and as such his philosophy and morality is a function of the highest bidder for his services, which in BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL is the church and state and in ANTONIO DAS MORTES the coffee and land-owning oligarchy. Hobsbawm points out that traiditionally in peasant societies there have been bandits who serve the landlords as well as those who ally with the oppressed. The practice of landlords hiring "deputies" in cases of local peasant rebellion is still extant in the Northeast today, and Antonio is not only a plausible and realistic character but serves an allegorical purpose as well.

Antonio is hired by the Church to destroy a nascent fanatical religious movement and its leader that is seen as representing a threat to the rule of the established clergy. Antonio's journey has its coincidental parallel in the journey of a peasant, his wife and infant who set out on a quest of their own. Manuel, with a life not unlike that of the peasant in VIDAS SECAS and TROPICI, kills his land-owning boss in an argument over a steer. For Manuel, the act is morally repugnant, and great guilt as well as fear of the authorities drives him to become a follower of the mystic Sebastiao (a character based on such figures as Conseilheiro of Canudos and Father Cicero of Joazeiro). In order to prove his dedication and devotion to Sebastiao, Manuel indulges with all of Sebastiao's followers in ritual ascetic acts such as carrying huge houlders on his head for many miles. Then in an act that had its parallel in a call for a blood-sacrifice made by a backlands prophet in 1838, Sebastiao called for his followers to make the ultimate sacrificial offering to prove their devotion. Manuel offers up his own son. Manuel's wife, outraged at the loss of her child and disillusioned with the prophet, murders him. Manuel and his wife then flee into the sertao. Antonio, who has been tracking the group which remains on the move looking for the "promised land" in spite of the loss of Sebastiao, massacres the entire following in a ritualistic and bloody sequence. In the course of his flight, Manuel encounters an outlaw bandit group led by the cangaceiro Corisco (who in real life was a lieutenant of Lampiao and formed a separate band) and becomes peripherally involved with them. Having dispatched the threat to the religious status quo, Antonio now begins to pursue Corisco and his band in order to eliminate the threat to secular authority. Antonio catches up with the outlaws and murders Corisco and all his followers in the same ritualistic way, and Manuel is left to wander alone in the desert. The entire film is linked together by a blind old peasant narrator who relates, in songs and words, the exploits of

Sebastiao, Corisco and Antonio. In the final sequence the words in a song refer to the day when the sertao will be the sea and the sea will be the sertao and ends with the words "The Earth belongs to Man and not to God or the Devil". Thus, Rocha has assigned Antonio a cathartic role, a man who must purge the Northeast of both the impotent and delusionary mysticism and the self-serving lumpen-banditry of the cangaceiros. Rocha, according to Ernest Callenbach in an excellent review of ANTONIO DAS MORTES in *Film Quarterly* (winter 1969), has declared that just as imperialists are necessary to dig their own graves, "so Antonio is necessary to bring about the revolution, or at least its spiritual precondition." Antonio frees the peasant from investing his hope for change in the futile and meaningless perterbations of the *beatos* and cangaceiros in BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL. It is this theme, reformulated, to which Rocha returns five years later in ANTONIO DAS MORTES.

The characters and actions symbolize the army's going over to serve the oppressed.

Many of the characters in these two films are taken from the actual history of the Northeast while others are derived from Rocha's personal experience. In ANTONIO DAS MORTES, Mata Vaca, the colonel's bodyguard and gunman, is patterned after an individual Rocha claims killed one of his relations when he was a child and who was killed sometime later by one of his cousins in revenge. The character of Antonio is modelled on Jose Rufino, an actual cangaceiro-hunter with whom Rocha spent much time. Much of the second half of BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL is based on what Rufino told him and when Rocha wanted to make ANTONIO DAS MORTES, he learned that a new cangaceiro had arisen in the Northeast, called Ze Crispin, and that Rufino had gone to catch him because the local police force was unable to do so.

Antonio, like his real-life counterpart Rufino, in the opening sequences of ANTONIO DAS MORTES, is sought out by the manager for a despotic landowner, "the Colonel", whose feudal hegemony is threatened by a local uprising of peasants sympathetic to Coiriana and his fellow cangaceiros. Whereas in BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL the cangaceiros and the followers of the prophet were two completely distinct, if not antagonistic groups, Coiriana's band includes a girl dressed entirely in white and referred to as "the holy one" as well as a Black man dressed in red who Rocha says symbolizes a Brazilian St. George, a saint who frees the people from oppression. Coiriana is depicted as a somewhat "responsible" social bandit who moreover has a broad-based peasant constituency and who is seen by both peasants and landowner as a potential change-agent. Therefore, when Antonio challenges and kills Coiriana in a ritualistic duel while the peasants and religious figures look on passively, he openly serves the forces of repression. Having killed the bandit leader, Antonio is confronted by the corrupt and greedy landowner and his promiscuous and treacherous wife, and undergoes a change which Rocha describes as "moral and personal." Antonio now sides with the peasants and the remaining religious figures and demands the distribution of food to the poor. In response, the landowner hires another band of killers to eliminate the turncoat Antonio. The film concludes with a multi-layered resolution by blood-letting: the landowner's wife, frustrated by the impotence of the manager in their joint plot against her husband, kills the manager by stabbing him to death; Antonio, joined by the local schoolteacher (intellectual turned activist), emerges victorious from a dramatically-filmed shoot-out with the gang hired by the landowner; and the landowner is ceremoniously dispatched by the Black St. George who runs him through with a lance from horseback.

Needless to say, the characters and their actions have, as Ernest Callenbach points out, "symbolic equivalences." If the "Colonel" represents the feudal landowner whose unswerving dedication to maintaining the status quo without concessions (an idea further emphasized by his being represented as blind in the film), the wife and the manager, Mata Vaca, represent the nationalist bourgeoisie which is divided against itself--between maintaining the institutions of the status quo or overturning them in order to benefit their own class interests. The local schoolteacher, says Rocha, is symbolic of the left-wing intellectual of middle-class background who is "freeing himself from the dust of his bourgeois way of thinking." By jointing Antonio in the last battle he represents a "person who must pass, must go from irony and skepticism to action" and thereby "become effective in the struggle for the people." Coiriana, "the holy one" and the Black St. George represent both actual characters of Northeast typology and symbols of "false hope" who are looked up to and passively followed by the peasantry. Finally, Antonio, the pivotal character in the film and the figure upon whom much of the political analysis must rest, symbolizes the army, traditionally the tool of repression and the armed servant and protector of the oligarchy. As Callenbach points out, "If these equivalences are even approximately accurate, the film exemplifies...what is in fact a crucial political phenomenon: the going over of the army from the service of the oppressors to that of the oppressed."

Rocha, in response to Callenbach's analysis and critique of ANTONIO DAS MORTES, which Callenbach compares to the 1938 Errol Flynn version of ROBIN HOOD because "both are fundamentally conservative, and constitute (like most folk art) diversions of thought and feeling from tender political questions," agrees at least partially with Callenbach's description of Antonio as the vested power and potential of the military. Although he maintains that Antonio's change is "profoundly mystical and personal," Rocha makes lengthy references to the progressive role played by the armies of Peru, Bolivia and Colombia.

Assigning the army a progressive role is a questionable proposition. Numerous examples, the most recent being the role of the supposedly "progressive" armed forces of Chile, point in quite an opposite direction. The nature of Antonio's sudden conversion, attributed by Rocha to a change both "moral" and "personal", is also questionable for, as Callenbach points out, "Armies in the real world do not switch their historical roles out of goodness of heart or by some metaphysical impulsion to virtue." If one looks to the film for guidance in understanding Antonio's reversal of allegiance, it appears that Antonio is moved not by the exploitation and suffering of the peasants, but rather is influenced by the virtue and piety of "the holy one," the girl saint. It is she who motivates him to join the peasants and his conversion is just that, a religious change from "sinfulness" to "righteousness."

The principal flaw of most of the cinema novo films stems from their interpretation of two key aspects of the Northeast, social banditry and archaic mysticism. The error in their analysis of these phenomena is two-fold, the former is romanticized while the revolutionary potential of the latter is overlooked. The cangaceiros are held up as heroic figures (even if not always heroes) while the beatos and their peasant followers are depicted as engaged in a futile and self-defeating process totally without potential for change into a more viable and revolutionary movement.

As Hobsbawm points out, social banditry exists in three forms: the archtypal Robin Hood or *noble robber*, the *primitive resistance fighter* such as the haiduk and the *terror-bringing avenger*, typified by the cangaceiros. The noble robber represents the reformist aspects of social banditry (Robin Hood fought against the injustices of the "wicked" John while remaining loyal to the monarchy, the "good" King Richard). While the terror-bringing avenger may become a symbol of the rejection of official authority and values through his anarchic and highly individualistic acts of rebellion, he is unlikely to be concerned with, or act in the interest of, the larger peasant community. The cangaceiro band is not organized to alter the social structure but rather to win for its outlaw members personal rather than class advantages within the existing structure.

Although social banditry and millenarianism are historically congruent, it is only when social banditry aligns itself with a millenarian movement that it can contribute in a significant way to social change. Social banditry alone "has next to no organization or ideology and is totally inadaptable to modern social movements" and its strength "is in inverse proportion to that of organized agrarian revolutionism and Socialism or Communism." (Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, p. 23)

Millenarianism, on the other hand, while also existing in a variety of forms, can be a potentially revolutionary movement as it is always directed toward fundamental and radical change of the existing order, unlike the outlaw movements. Hobsbawm points out that the tendency is to dismiss millenarian movements as religious in nature (particularly the chiliastic type) while the millenarianists are frequently equall, fervent about and concerned with radical social change. It is true that they most frequently look backwards, to the outmoded social forms of the past for their inspiration, resulting in an essentially reactionary quest. In addition, the millenarianists are frequently not *makers* of revolution, "they expect it to make itself, by divine revelation, by an announcement from on high, by a miracle--they expect it to happen somehow." (Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, p. 59) Hobsbawm describes two other forms of millenarianist movements: the "libertarian communist"

The revolutionary potential of the archaic mysticism in the Northeast has been overlooked.

such as that of the Chilean "red zones" of the 1930's, where the peasant movement attempts to establish small self-governing communities owing allegiance to neither Church or State; the third form being that movement typified by the organizations of Sicilian peasants, still extant, in which the forms of "village anarchist organization" has necessarily evolved into more politicized and politically active units. The Northeast had its own village anarchist organization equivalent in the development of the "peasant leagues" in the early 1960's.

BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL (Glauber Rocha)

MATRAGA (Roberto Santos)

GRANDE CIDADE (Carlos Diegues)

LAND IN ANGUISH (Glauber Rocha)

The point of this elaboration is not to deny the particular forms that both millenarianism and social banditry have taken in Brazil, but rather to illustrate that social banditry is rarely a viable political force (and therefore its choice as metaphor is a poor one), and that millenarian movements are not necessarily devoid of revolutionary potential. What cinema novo has done is to exaggerate by the utilization of symbol, metaphor and allegory the revolutionary potential of the cangaceiro and simultaneously hopelessly enmesh the millenarianist movement in mysticism, thereby robbing it of its potential secular and social significance.

There is another no less important criticism that must be made of the cinema novo films. Almost without exception the characterization of the peasantry is that of an inert, hopeless and deadened mass, uninvolved and uncomprehending. It is a cinema of despair and pessimism. In OS FUZIS, by Ruy Guerra, when a lone truckdriver rebels against the injustice of a well-stocked food warehouse protected by the army from starving peasants, his call to rebellion and peasant insurrection goes unheeded. He is pursued through the streets of the village by the soldiers and although the peasants do some looting, they take no active part in this rebellion and watch passively as the rebel is tracked down.

In ANTONIO DAS MORTES and BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL the peasants are depicted as a mass which may follow but never lead, blind and mute appendages to a mystic, cangaceiro or an Antonio, never taking an active role in the struggle. One must question why Rocha chooses to present the peasants in this way as this depiction does

not reflect historical reality. Recent organizing efforts in the Northeast point in the opposite direction and the powerful Peasant Leagues of the sixties indicate vast potential for active and engaged organization and struggle. The men and women assembled at Canudos with Antonio Conseilheiro died fighting, while the followers of Luis Prestes, many of whom were peasants, marched some 21,000 miles, epitomizing the struggle of the poor against the rich. Undoubtedly, many feel hopeless and cynical about the possibilities for change, but little encouragement is to be gained from continually depicting the peasants as hopelessly mired in mysticism, fatalism and resignation.

While this despair and cynicism is most pronounced in the depiction of the peasants, it is not limited to them. Rocha further investigates the psychological dynamics of a character like Antonio in TERRA EM TRANSE (1967) which Rocha considers an "intellectual work" and his most important film. Attacked by some groups on the left as a fascist film, TERRA EM TRANSE attempts to deal with the problems of the intellectual in post-Goulart Brazil. The central character, Paulo Martins, is ambivalent like Antonio and, according to Rocha, reflects his own doubts and political ambivalence. In O BRAVO GUERREIRO by Gustavo Dahl, also set in contemporary Brazil, the central character is Miguel Horta, a radical politician, union official and lawyer who is gradually co-opted by the ruling regime; at the end of the film, in despair Horta holds a gun to his mouth. In some of the non-sertao films of cinema novo, the ambivalence of individuals on the verge of making political commitments is generally treated in a non-critical and ambiguous way. Antonio's own conversion is essentially ambiguous. Cinema novo presents characters who are neither politically coherent nor committed. If this is the actual situation in Brazil (as Rocha and the cinema novo filmmakers see it) it would seem all the more important to offer more than a filmic reflection of the intellectual and ideological confusion.

More than anything else the political weakness and ambiguity of the cinema novo films derives from the double seduction of the desire for a nationalist film movement and the availability of a rich and esoteric folklore upon which to base it. Rocha is more involved and more articulate when dealing with theories of filmmaking and the cultural characteristics of the Northeast than he is when analyzing the political implications or applications of either. When Rocha claims for cinema novo a "revolutionary" role in

Peasants are seen as a hopeless, uninvolved mass.

Brazil, he is doing so at the *cultural* and not the political level. While the influence of such Hollywood filmmakers as Peckinpah and Hawks is highly evident, there is little question that Rocha's films and cinema novo generally constitute a successful attempt at cultural decolonization. While all reclamations of a national culture constitute a first step in establishing a national identity and consciousness, it does not follow that all cultural expositions have meaningful *political* effects.

Rather than dealing with the limitations and the potential of millenarian movements and social banditry of the cangaceiro type, Rocha has allowed his film form, content and style to be trapped by the irrationality and obscurity that hinders these very movements. Rather than his films and characters rising above and out of the obscurantism of the Northeast mythology, Rocha chooses to descend and finds refuge in its rich but distorting reality. Brazil, like other Latin American countries, has had to labor under the impact of American and European cultural domination. Rocha, like the colonized artist of whom Fanon speaks in *Wretched of the Earth* has forgotten that "The colonized man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope" rather than using cultural "instruments...which he wishes to be national, but which [are] strangely reminiscent of exoticism."

> "A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature... A national culture in underdeveloped countries should therefore take its place at the very heart of the struggle for freedom which these countries are carrying on."
> (Franz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, p. 232)

The development of cinema novo over the past ten years illustrates this problem of orientation. Rocha, in an interview in *Cineaste* (Summer, 1970) describes three phases of cinema novo: the first phase he simply calls "films about the Northeast" (GANGA ZUMBA, VIDAS SECAS, OS FUZIS and BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL). He describes the second phase, such films as O DESAFIO (THE CHALLENGE), TERRA EM TRANSE (LAND IN ANGUISH) and O BRAVO GUERREIRO (THE BRAVE WARRIOR) made after the coup d'etat, as films about political power primarily in urban Brazil. The third phase, such films as MACUNAIMA, BRASIL ANO 2,000, O ALIENISTA and ANTONIO DAS MORTES are referred to as "tropicalist." It is this third phase, characterized by a mixed bag of social and political themes against a backdrop of characters, images and contexts not unlike the richness and floridness of the Brazilian jungle, which is "strangely reminiscent" of an artificial "exoticism." These are films in which the rich cultural texure of Brazil has been pushed to the limit and exploited for its own aesthetic ends rather than for its appropriateness as political metaphor.

Ruy Guerra in OS FUZIS manages to avoid the trap into which Rocha has fallen by having an act of de-mystification performed within the film by the victims of mystification themselves. Through most of the film, the peasants are shown to be enmeshed in the mystico-religious system which is part of the Northeast. An old man retells the story of Conseilheiro and we see the starving peasants worshipping and pampering a holy ox. After the truck-driver's futile revolt against the army which is guarding a store of food for the landlord, the peasants in a fury of rage and frustration descend on the ox and butcher it, exclaiming that after all "it is only meat." Guy Guerra is modest in his political claims for his film and understands, probably more clearly than Rocha, the translation of his convictions and intentions into film form:

> "My films have no intentional political purposes, no recommendations, no solution. I am not interested in industrialization nor the agrarian problem. I only wanted to illustrate the social reality of the northeast of Brazil, the cultural relations between the traditions, the religious fanaticism-fatalism and mysticism... It is not necessary to understand everything, but it is enough to incide thinking, and that one reflect about these problems after having seen the film."
> (*Cine Al Dia*, "Realidad Y Alternativa" (April 1968))

This simple statement, "It is only meat," begins to point in the direction of demythologizing and intervening in the vicious cycle which is at the root of traditional mysticism and transforms it into secular rationalism, whereas Rocha places the form and content of his films squarely within this arcane system.

The political and economic hegemony enjoyed by the sugar and coffee barons of the Northeast during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been replaced by the urban bourgeoisie and high investment capital of the industrialized centers of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo. With this shift of wealth and power from the countryside to the cities, a large industrial working class has developed. If, as Rocha claims, the cangaceiros are utilized by cinema novo filmmakers to relate to the peasant consciousness and the tropicalist characters serve to relate to the consciousness of Brazil's urban middle-class, when and how do the cinema novo filmmakers direct their attention to the working class? While it seems a fatal omission to ignore the urban working class, granting Rocha the right to direct his attention where he wishes, are there not cultural or historical events involving the peasantry that are better suited for political explication and development of consciousness than tales of the cangaceiros and santos? Cinema novo completely ignores the nascent revolutionary developments which occurred throughout the Northeast from 1924 through the 1960's. In 1924, a series of rebellions of young army officers broke out in Sao Paolo. A young army captain, Luis Prestes, began his famous march at this time, covering some 21,600 miles throughout the vast interior regions attempting to incide the rural masses to revolt. In 1935, the Communist Party launched an armed rebellion, the Pernambuco "putsch", the first and only time that a Communist Party bound to the Moscow line ever engaged in violent revolution in Latin America. Their call was for "Bread, Land and Liberty for the People." In the mid-1940's, the Communist Party organized (and then quickly disbanded) the original Peasant Leagues. In the mid-1950's, Francisco Juliao began his association with the New Peasant Leagues which were to attract large numbers of organized peasants and national attention. In the decade from 1950 to 1960, the Peasant Leagues were only one of a number of rural union organizations and there were numerous strikes

Brazil has a seductive and rich folklore upon which to base a nationalist film movement.

and demonstrations which the landlords fought bitterly and bloodily.

The above is hardly an exhaustive list of all the struggles engaged in by the peasants of the Northeast. One must ask why Rocha and the cinema novo filmmakers have chosen to concentrate on the "romantic" and mystical elements of Northeast history when there are so many vital and progressive historical movements. With the exception of GANGA ZUMBA by Carlos Digues, concerning the Republic of Palmares set up in the backlands by rebellious and runaway slaves during the seventeenth century, few other cinema novo films use successful or constructive historical events or personages for their subject.

While the people of Brazil are presented with one aspect of their culture and history in the cinema novo films, they will not find any clearly defined alternative to sporadic and futile individual rebellions against the violent and repressive conditions under which they currently live. Instead, cinema novo turns their attention backward and inward to archaic political and social forces which are by their very nature incapable of producing meaningful social change. Callenbach, in summarizing ANTONIO DAS MORTES, states it clearly:

> By formulating the antagonism between oppressors and oppressed in a symbolic and static way, rather than in a process-oriented material way, the film preserves and continues the malaise of Latin American political life. The way to demystify a feudal system is not to play elegant symbolic games, but to show concretely how the system works. Only truth is revolutionary, Gramsci tells us, Antonio is a false hope; his drama is beside the point. It is portentously said of Antonio Das Mortes that he prayed in ten churches, yet had no patron saint--at least until he found "the holy one". Maybe he should have tried Marx.
> (Callenbach, "Comparative Anatomy of Folk-Myth Films: Robin Hood and Antonio Das Mortes", *Film Quarterly* (Winter 1969), p. 47. □

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Land in Anguish

Revolutionary Lessons

--Robert Stamm

TERRA EM TRANSE (LAND IN ANGUISH), an explosive study of art and politics in the third-world, is Glauber Rocha's most personal film as well as his most brilliant contribution to political cinema. A number of circumstances make this re-reading of the film especially timely. Recent events in Chile, where a right-wing, US-supported coup overturned a popularly elected and progressive government, remind us that TERRA EM TRANSE was made after a similar coup, also US-supported, deposed Brazilian president Joao Goulart in 1964. When it first appeared, the film was widely misread as a romantic endorsement of Guevarism: the film's final shot of Paolo with up-raised rifle being interpreted as a call for the kind of armed guerilla struggle that led Che Guevara and Fidel Castro to victory in Cuba. But in fact, as we shall see, the film is more interested in de-mystifying the liberal politics that led up to the coup than in proposing any specific revolutionary strategy.

The film is especially relevant to any discussion of a revolutionary esthetics for film, particularly in light of the revived interest in the implications for cinema of Brecht's idea of distanciation. TERRA EM TRANSE points the way to a possible political cinema which avoids the twin dead-ends of a condescending populism on the one hand and an aridly theoretical reflexivity on the other. Populism (Pontecorvo's BURN, Costa-Gavras' Z) wraps a radical political message in Hollywood packaging in an attempt to be accessible, while reflexive cinema (Godard's LE GAI SAVOIR, Godard-Gorin's WIND FROM THE EAST) makes us painfully aware of the filmic medium by self-consious investigation of its processes. Rocha's film is reflexive--an essay on the intersection of film and politics--but it is neither bloodless nor dispassionate. While allowing for the role of emotions in political life, it never falls into the trap of merely personal outburst; nor does it create idealized characters as objects of our identification. Saturated with anger, eloquence, personal and collective hysteria, it is in no sense a Hollywood film, for it investigates rather than exploits its emotions.

The events of TERRA EM TRANSE takes place in the imaginary state of Eldorado. Felipe Vieira, governor of the province of Alecrim, refuses to resist a coup led by the rightist Porfirio Diaz.[1] After an angry discussion with Vieira, the protagonist-narrator Paolo Martins, accompanied by Vieira's secretary Sara, flees the governor's palace and is mortally wounded by the police. As his life ebbs away, he recalls the events which led to this personal and political defeat. Four years earlier he had been the poet-protegé of Diaz, before leaving him in order to explore a more political kind of poetry. He goes to Alecrim to work with the communist militant Sara in the gubernatorial campaign of Vieira, a liberal populist politician. They win, but the governor-elect, because of his ties to absentee landlords, violates his campaign promises and unleashes his police against the peasants. Disillusioned, Paolo throws himself into a life of orgies and existential nausea.

Later, when Sara asks him to make a televised report in order to destroy Diaz, now allied with EXPLINT (read imperialism). Paolo accepts out of love for Sara and makes a film, "Biography of an Adventurer," recounting Diaz' successive political betrayals. Denounced as a traitor by Diaz, Paolo joins Vieira's presidential bandwagon. In an atmosphere of popular celebration marred by repressive violence, the people dance the samba and contribute to the gathering momentum of Vieira's populist campaign. The right, fearful of electoral defeat, beings to prepare its putsch. Brought back to the starting point of the film, we see Paolo offer Vieira a gun, which Vieira refuses. Cross-cutting alternates Paolo's final dying moments with the coronation of Diaz and a long last shot shows a silhouetted Paolo with uplifted rifle.

Organized around Paolo's memories as he lies dying, the narrative of TERRA EM TRANSE consists of the lucid recital of a life dominated by political illusions and thus conforms to what has been called, in reference to Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, the "Quixotic formula of systematic disenchantment." As if to highlight this structure of enchantment-disenchantment, Paolo speaks in both the prologue and epilogue of the impossibility of his naive and impotent political faith. The first object of his faith is Porfirio Diaz, whose very name has divine resonances, whom Paolo calls the "god of his youth." The second object of his faith is his "leader," the populist demogogue Vieira. The word "leader," in fact, reverberates ironically throughout the film, culminating in Paolo's explosion of disgust against Vieira when he fails to resist the coup: "You see, Sara?...Our leader!...Our great leader!" What is new in Rocha's elaboration of the Cervantic formula is the precise political meaning he gives to it. Paolo comes to be disaffected from all the bourgeois political leaders, whether rightists like Diaz or liberals like Vieira. In his disappointment, he is doubled by people like the journalist Alvaro and by communist militants like Alto and Sara. Paolo shares his disenchantment with the people, who "can believe in no leader." (Like the peasant leader Felicio, Paolo goes from faith in Vieira's promises to disillusionment and death.)

The film as a whole elaborates what can be called the theme of the "apparent difference." Vieira and Diaz appear to occupy opposite ends of the political spectrum, but the parallel montage of their electoral campaigns, superficially contrasting them, on a deeper level creates an ironic equation of the two politicians. The press-magnate Fuentes, the "nationalist," thinks his role differs from that of Diaz; historical forces stronger than both of them make their roles converge. Paolo fondly thinks that he is not an oppressor; but on occasion he acts as Vieira's policeman. Sara and the militants seem farther to the left, but their actions only reinforce Vieira, and ultimately, Diaz. All these political figures are linked because of their common ties to the bourgeoisie. All of them, with the exception of Diaz, nurse the illusion of their own purity. The film's doubling procedures, however, constantly remind us of their subterranean affinities with their supposed enemies.

At times the struggle between Paolo and Diaz seems less ideological than psychological, a case of the artist wrestling with his alter-ego. Pablo nurses a kind of oedipal hatred toward Diaz, his political and spiritual father. The oedipal note is sounded in the final ironic words of the "Biography of an Adventurer"--"Here is the father of our country." A bizarre, almost sexual bond links Paolo and Diaz. At one point, Paolo imagines himself fighting with Diaz and abandoning him, while Diaz cries hysterically, in the accents of desparate and unrequited love: "You left me alone, alone!" The film's editing reinforces the parallels between Paolo and Diaz ("Diaz, dying like me..."). At another point, the off-screen voice of Paolo is superimposed on the image of Diaz, whose lips are moving, as if Paolo were somehow speaking *through* Diaz. This identification of Paolo with Diaz has a social as well as a psychological dimension. Diaz personifies the imperial origins of Brazil. He carries the cross of the Portugese navigators and the black flag of the Inquisition. Here, the film suggests, is the historical source of the bourgeois class in Barzil. These are the "rotten roots" to which Paolo refers. Paolo tries to disown these roots by crying: "He is not in my blood!" He imagines himself killing Diaz, but in so doing he is not so much eliminating an individual as liquidating his own personal and historical past. For socially speaking, he is what Alvaro calls him, "a dirty copy of Diaz."

The central dialectic of TERRA EM TRANSE involves art on the one hand, and social reality on the other. The dialectic is summed up in the poem which comments on Paolo's death:

> He failed to sign the noble pact
> between the pure soul and the bloody cosmos,
> a gladiator defunct but still intact--
> so much violence, yet so much tenderness.
>
> --Mario Faustino
> *Epitaph of a Poet*

The bloody cosmos and the pure soul, violence and tenderness, politics and poetry--these are the poles around which TERRA EM TRANSE revolves. The film shows the degradation of the ideal in the real world, where "purity rots in tropical gardens." Romanticism, the film suggests, is out of place in a world where the political earth is in convulsion. Poets like Paolo, who cultivate the private sensibility in the world of the *putsch*, do not survive in places like Eldorado. In TERRA EM TRANSE, social violence is constantly intruding on private tenderness, just as the soundtrack superimposes the crackling fire of machine guns on the tender harmonies of the Brazilian composer Villa-Lobos.

To the intellectual hunger for the ideal of romanticism, TERRA EM TRANSE opposes the real physical hunger of the Brazilian masses. When Paolo, quoting the French romantic Chateaubriand, speaks of his "hunger for the absolute," Sara brings him back to earth by asserting simply: "Hunger." While Paolo bemoans "the misery of our souls," Sara is more preoccupied with *social* misery. Rocha's art refuses to obscure the fact of hunger. His films treat hunger as subject and as pervasive metaphor; his cinema is hungry in its urgency as well as in the enforced technological poverty which characterizes film production in the third world. It is not surprising that Rocha entitled one of his most important declarations of artistic principles: "An Esthetic of Hunger."

Paolo represents the poet, abroad in the world of class struggle and coups d'etat. His habitual mode of speech, simultaneously frenetic and solemn, is poetic.[2] The lava of his words repeatedly erupts into apostrophe, incantation, angry curses. His poetry, ubiquitous in TERRA EM TRANSE, punctuates, interrupts, underlines and counterpoints the action. Most often, however, it expresses his inner voice, rather like the soliloquys in *Hamlet*. Paolo recurrently appears in closeup with his voice off, in a technique reminiscent of the Orson Welles' adaptations of Shakespearean tragedies. Paolo, furthermore, shares significant traits with Hamlet--an overheated imagination, a perverse virtuosity of language, a rigorous scepticism coexisting with exasperated idealism, and the view of himself as the legitimate heir of power. Like Hamlet, he is the more or less lucid critic of an ambient corruption in which he himself participates. His almost obsessive references to death, to worms, to a people whose sadness has rotted its blood, reinforce the atmosphere of suffocating malaise. TERRA EM TRANSE is Shakespearean in its intense interplay of the personal and the political. Shakespearean as well are the frequent ruptures of tone, with lyric calm preceding explosions of violence, and the complex interaction of love scenes and political scenes, so that the two come to color and "contaminate" each other.

Apart from putting poetry to diverse rhetorical uses, TERRA EM TRANSE also pinpoints the diverse political uses to which poetry can be put. While working as Diaz' protege, Paolo timidly expresses a desire to speak of politics in a new kind of poetry. Diaz condescendingly suggests that everyone feels radical in their youth. Paolo subsequently offers

his services to the apparently more receptive Vieira. The country needs poets, Vieira remarks, like those romantics whose voices stirred the crowds. He applauds Sara's recitation of a poem ("The street belongs to the people, as the sky belongs to the condor") by Castro Alves, a Brazilian romantic poet who fought for the abolitionist cause. The poem highlights the historical ambiguity of Romanticism; the same movement that produced the self-indulgent narcissism of the French poet Lamartine also engendered the socially conscious poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Castro Alves. Vieira's allusion to "those romantics" evokes a moment in Brazilian history when political and artistic movements acted in symbiosis. The subsequent events of the film, however, show the precise political limits within which poetry, and art generally, operate. It becomes obvious that Vieira prefers his political poets to be safely buried in the past. When Paolo tries to dissuade Vieira from using the police against the peasants, a voice-over sings the Castro Alves poem. The street may belong to the people in the world of poetry, the film suggests, but in fact it belongs to their oppressors.

TERRA EM TRANSE criticises the naive notion that art in itself can create a revolution. Paolo Martins loses his initial faith in political poetry, concluding that "words are useless." Sara, who generally represents the best face of orthodox communism, tells Paolo that poetry and politics are too much for one man. Literal-minded critics, taking Sara's judgment as the film's final verdict on the question of art and politics, fail to appreciate the dialectical relation between poetry and politics in the film. They also miss the obvious irony, since the film itself not only "includes" poetry but also proceeds poetically, constituting the cinematographic equivalent of poetry.

Cinema has accustomed us to filmmakers who include in their films surrogates for themselves (for example, the magic-lanternist in Bergman's THE MAGICIAN) or analogues for their art. In the references to poetry in TERRA EM TRANSE, one must read as well art in general, and cinema in particular. Paolo's talk of new poetic forms in which to speak of politics inevitably calls up Rocha the filmmaker, creating new forms of political cinema. Who would know better than he that established power prefers servile pens--and cameras--to aggressive and radical ones? Both his enthusiasm for poetry and his reservations about its social efficacy apply as well to cinema. One moment in the film effectively equates the two. In a shot whose backlighting and rectangular composition recall Godard, we see Paolo aim his camera out of his apartment window and take a photograph, while his off-screen voice comments: "I, for example, devote myself to the vain exercise of poetry."

Paolo, we must remember, is a journalist and filmmaker as well as a poet. He makes "Biography of an Adventurer" in order to destroy his fallen idol Diaz, who is shown laughing while the off-screen commentary tells of the successive betrayals behind his rise to pre-eminence. In one sense, "Biography of an Adventurer" is a kind of micro-tale which resumes and recapitulates the film as a whole, for the film-within-the-film, like TERRA EM TRANSE, recounts Diaz' rise to political power. On a deeper level, however, "Biography of an Adventurer" tells a story which resembles that of another "adventurer"--Paolo himself in TERRA EM TRANSE.

Important differences, however, prevent the film-within-the-film from being a mere replica in miniature of the film as a whole. The "Biography" is a piece of militant journalism sponsored by one political force in order to destroy another political force. It is the kind of film that politically committed filmmakers often make or are encouraged to make--clear, factual, militant, and immediately "useful." The dialectical juxtaposition of two kinds of political film brings out the strengths and weaknesses inherent in each. The "Biography" is direct, "effective," but also unsubtle, manipulative, and slick. TERRA EM TRANSE as a whole is complex, all nuance and subtle contradiction, but at the same time it is difficult of access, full of subjectivity, somewhat confusing. Thus the film-within-the-film serves as a critique of the totality of the film, and the film as a whole points up the limitations of the film-within-the-film.

TERRA EM TRANSE shares a number of features with CITIZEN KANE--its flashback structure, its journalistic subject, its verbal and visual exuberance, its baroque density. The "Biography," for its part, is modelled on the "March of Time" newsreel in Welles' film. Like the newsreel, it exposes the duplicity and treachery of people in power. Diaz represents an underdeveloped, third-world Hearst; both of them are wealthy, arrogant and demogogic. In both films, the metallic stacatto voice of a news-reporter hamers home the points of the film with heavy-handed irony. Both of the films-within-the-film, furthermore, are situated in a precise political context. In CITIZEN KANE, the masters of a new kind of filmic journalism finance a film in order to "bury" the older journalism of the Kane-Hearst empire. Paolo makes his film to politically bury Diaz. TERRA EM TRANSE sensitizes us to the social context of filmmaking. We are shown that films do not emerge full-blown from the heads of their creators. Paolo makes his film because certain political enemies of Diaz pay for him to make it. Paolo, having offered his humble pen first to Diaz and then to Vieira, now offers his humble camera to those who would destroy Diaz. If Paolo's poetry was already conditioned by political ends, his film--since cinema by its very nature is immersed in socio-economic process--is even more profoundly affected by political and material interests. The film exposes the illusion of the self-determining artist who thinks he's using the apparatus which is in fact using him.

Both films are treated reflexively. The newsreel in CITIZEN KANE is shown as part of a discussion among the participating journalists. We are shown a projection room and the projectionist who adjusts his equipment. The journalists discuss possible changes in the film. We are made aware that film is artifice, a collective creation, the end-product of innumerable esthetic and political decisions. The "Biography" highlights the artifice of film in a different way. As an off-screen voice delineates his perfidies, Diaz laughs as if he were conscious of the soundtrack but unmoved. The footage has obviously been manipulated, for we see Diaz perform in a film whose political ends he would never have approved. The technique reminds us that all films are fabrications; it illustrates Godard's notion that the distinction between documentary and fiction film is an arbitrary one.

This reflexivity partially explains a puzzling fact about TERRA EM TRANSE. On the surface, the film leads us to identify with a central hero, yet somehow we never do. As both narrator and protagonist of the tale, Paolo is the only personnage who is granted subjectivity. His sensibility colors all the events of the film. His lyric poems punctuate the action, and lyric poetry, after all, is the privileged mode of personal feeling. Voice-over monologues in conjunction with close-shots of Paolo--certainly the cinematographic equivalent of the lyrical mode--recur throughout the film. Paolo, furthermore, resembles the conventional cinematic hero. Young, handsome, dynamic, sensitive, articulate, sexually attractive, he would seem to constitute an ideal object for our identification. Yet the identification never takes place. We neither identify with Paolo's life nor weep over his death.

In a sense, TERRA EM TRANSE is linked to one of the least realistic of artistic genres--opera. Rocha has often expressed his fondness for the "cinema-opera" of Welles and Eisenstein. Opera itself, especially Verdi and his Brazilian counterpart, Carlos Gomes, pervades the soundtrack. Paolo's death, coextensive with the film, recalls the protracted agonies of opera, where people die eloquently, interminably, and with poetry on their lips. As if to call attention to the operatic reference, the wounded Paolo twice declaims: "Eu preciso cantar!" (I must sing!) Paolo does not try to escape or locate a doctor. Sara does not bind his wounds. Such basely material preoccupations have no place in cinema-opera. The film also shares with opera its love of exalted, stylized speech. Although some of the dialogue is naturalistically rendered, the world of the film remains one where people speak naturally to each other in poetry.

In his famous essay on the significance of a revitalized opera for the creation of epic theatre, Brecht speaks of his desire to make opera contemporary and democratic. He claims that opera, while procuring a certain realism, annihilates it by having everyone sing. If we apply the terms of his comparison of epic and dramatic theatre, we find that TERRA EM TRANSE invariably falls into the epic category. Rather than incarnate a process, it tells its story with narrative distance. Rather than involve the spectator, it transforms him into a critical observor of the contradictions of character. We are in a sense Paolo; yet at the same time we see him critically, much as we see a figure like Mother Courage, simultaneously from within and without. Paolo, like Mother Courage, ultimately learns very little from the disasters that befall him, but we as an audience can learn much by observing him. He is, as Walter Benjamin said of Galy Gay, the protagonist of Brecht's *A Man's a Man*, "an empty stage on which the contradictions of our society are acted out." Rather than treat Paolo as an exhibit of some absolutized Human Nature, TERRA EM TRANSE makes him and his transformations the object of study.

The mechanisms that subvert our identification with Paolo are extremely complex. Paolo is less a rounded character than a political figure, the point of convergence of various political and cultural forces. Our interest in Paolo, consequently, is always subordinated to our interest in the political realities in which he is enmeshed. The title reads TERRA EM TRANSE, not PAOLO EM TRANSE. The film aborts our natural tendancy to idealize Paolo, for he is always seen critically, and first of all by himself. At one point, he denounces his own bourgeois class as week and decadent. He derides himself as "a romantic," and other characters echo his auto-critique. The communist militants berate his political irresponsibility, while Sara always brings him back to concrete social reality. To his temptation for facile heroism, she responds: "We don't need heroes." When he laments having sacrificed his profoundest ambitions, she reminds him what real sacrifice means --thankless political work, childlessness, imprisonment and torture. The film also insists on the scorn that Paolo displays toward the very people he wants to liberate. While clinging to a romantic notion of "the people," he shows only contempt for them in his everyday life. It is as if Rocha has anticipated, within the film itself, all possible criticisms of his protagonist. His refusal of heroes reflects both his analysis of the Brazilian political situation as well as his programmatic opposition to Hollywood conventions of character.

This critical undercutting of Paolo's status as hero does not, however, fully explain our failure to identify with him. The failure derives rather from the basic esthetic strategy of the film--its refusal of the techniques of dramatic realism. TERRA EM TRANSE underlines its anti-realistic intentions by the ultimate implausability--the posthumous narrator. Everything conspires, furthermore, to diminish any feeling of suspense. The film is framed by a prologue and epilogue, both of which treat the coup d'etat, Paolo's flight and his subsequent death. We know from the outset both the how and the why of Paolo's death, and this knowledge frees us to look at the film critically, as an analysis of political forces. Rocha is less interested in the outcome of the conflict than in an "anatomy" of the conflict. He has called TERRA EM TRANSE an "anti-dramatic film, which destroys itself by a *montage à repetitions*." The narrative is constantly derailed, deconstructed, re-elaborated. The incidents of the film are exploded, analyzed into a play of political forces.

The world of TERRA EM TRANSE is one of spatio-temporal discontinuity. Rather than giving us the conventional impression of spatio-temporal coherence, Rocha forces us to reconstruct spatial and temporal relationships. There are no establishing shots to situate us. We are further disoriented by dizzying camera movements and an unorthodox variety of camera angles. Even in sequences characterized by spatial homogeneity, there is discontinuity in the cinematographic treatment of the unified space. We are given fragments which defy organization into a narrative whole. In the various orgy and cabaret sequences, for example, it is impossible to divine any pre-existing fiction which has been treated elliptically. We have to create the spatiality and the temporality of the scene.

TERRA EM TRANSE proliferates in jump cuts and violations of orthodox "continuity." Two different shots, for example, show Sara entering the same door twice in a row in what the film itself designates as a temporally impossible repetition. Violence, above all, is consistently de-realized by the editing. Guns are omnipresent but they are never coordinated with their sounds. We see pistols and hear machine guns; we hear machine guns but see nothing. A policeman on a motorcycle presumably shoots Paolo, but we see no wound. Violence is treated in a fragmented and anti-realistic way, in keeping with Rocha's expressed desire to reflect on violence rather than make a spectacle of it.

Realism is further undermined by an autonomous and discontinuous soundtrack. There are contradictions, for example, between visual and aural "scale": we see Fuentes in extreme long shot but hear his voice in aural "close-up." We see Alto fire a machine gun, but we hear nothing; yet the people quiet down, as if *they* had heard it. Then Rocha suspends the soundtrack to an unnaturally total silence.

The same autonomy which characterizes the soundtrack also marks the camera movements. The camera does not generally accompany the action; rather, it performs its own autonomous ballet of stylized, geometricized and choreographed movements, creating a tension between the mobility of the personages and that of the camera. The work of the camera is extremely "visible" and the visibility is designated as such by the inclusion in certain shots of the equipment involved in making a film. At one point,

for example, we see a cameraman filming exactly the shot--of the murdered man of the people--that we have just seen in the film.

TERRA EM TRANSE refuses transparence and illusionism in yet another sense, by always making us aware of the rhetorical and sytlistic mediation of the story. The film exhibits a conflict of cinematographic styles, so that the meaning partially emerges from the creative tension between diverse methods of filmic writing. Alongside the Wellesian influence, two other specifically cinematographic styles can be discerned. One is the style of direct cinema, obvious in the hand-held camera, in the frequent use of direct sound, and in the preference for ambient light. The technique, when this style predominates, seems to operate by chance; people block the camera's access to key personnages, as if the camera were capturing spontaneous moments of everyday life. Coexisting with this direct style is the style of Eisensteinian montage, which reconstructs the action as a function of the director's political intentions. The Eisensteinian style is visible in the jump-cuts and deliberate mis-matches between shots, in the use of socially emblematic personnages (Felicio *the* peasant, Geronimo *the* union official, Vieira *the* populist), in the graphic stylization, and in the use of non-synchronous sound.

Glauber Rocha does not merely cite the cinematic tradition; he uses it and transforms it. One moment, for example, recalls the sequence from POTEMKIN when the goateed Doctor Smirnov, responding to complaints by the sailors, uses his glasses as a kind of magnifying glass to examine maggot-covered meat, which he pronounces "perfectly healthy and ready to be eaten." Rocha has his senator, after lavishing grandiloquent praise on Eldorado's perfect society, use his glasses in an identical fashion to examine the corpse of the murdered man of the people. The analogy is clear--in both cases the corrupt representatives of established power deny the most glaring evidence of social ills. The senator's empty and swollen phrases mask sordid political realities. He too pronounces a visibly sick society, a maggot-ridden corpse, "perfectly healthy."

Just as Eisenstein drew on the popular theater of his day--his "montage of attractions" originally referred to the "attractions" in a circus; tightrope, liontamer, clown--so Rocha turns to account various popular traditions and "lower" forms. Vieira's electoral campaign is treated as an ambulatory circus, aptly metaphorizing the bread and circuses of populist politics. Thus Rocha exploits the theatricality inherent in certain privileged moments of Brazilian collective life--circuses, carnival, samba schools, political rallies, processions.

TERRA EM TRANSE operates a double demystification--one political, the other esthetic. It deconstructs two styles of representation. Populism, after all, constitutes a style of political representation. In its Latin American version, certain progressive and nationalist elements of the bourgeoisie enlist the support of the people in order to advance their own interests. TERRA EM TRANSE performs a *mise-en-scene* of the contradictions of populism. The character Vieira represents a composite political figure, combining the traits of a number of Brazilian populist leaders. The film exposes the fatal compromises that Vieira makes as well as his failure of nerve in moments of conflict with the extreme right. The sequence of confrontation between the peasants and Vieira's police unmasks the contradiction between the electoral promises of populism and its real commitments. To Paolo's question--"I wondered how the governor-elect would respond to the promises of the candidate."--the sequence gives an unequivocal answer: The governor-elect responds with guns and billy clubs. Populism sets a trap for the people. It incites the people to speak, but repressses them when their voices of protest become too strident. It invites the people into the palace, but murders them if they become too militant. Paternalistic encouragement precedes brutal repression.

On another level, TERRA EM TRANSE rejects an esthetic style of representation which might also be labelled "populist." The populist esthetic is paternalistic. It claims that art should speak to the people in simple and transparent language, at the risk of not "communicating." It practices the sugar-coated pill theory of art. It is sweet in order to be useful. To get its message across, it gives the public its habitual dose of cinematic gratifications--an intrigue, a love story, spectacle. It treats the public as slightly retarded, in need of a simplistic and prettifying art, just as Vieira speaks demogogically of justice and the power of the people, while doing nothing to advance the political maturation of the people. Populism treats the people as mere extras; it wants its spectators to be passive.

Just as important as this work of demystification is the fact that TERRA EM TRANSE renders the "feel" of political experience. The film recognizes the importance of human feelings in politics--the euphoric camaraderie of a political campaign, the resentments which arise when fragile alliances disintegrate, the provisional relative moralities of political combat, with its betrayals and problematic commitments. TERRA EM TRANSE communicates the anguished excitement of political action in a brutally repressive Latin American context. The film conveys an atmosphere of menace and the pervasive odor of imminent death. One cannot expect a Brazilian political film to have the icy theoretical distance of Godard's LE GAI SAVOIR, for leftist politics in Brazil is literally a matter of life and death, as it rarely is for left-bank intellectuals.

TERRA EM TRANSE portrays what Rocha has called the "tragic carnival" of Brazilian politics. The carnival ambiance is omnipresent in TERRA EM TRANSE. Fuentes, in carnival costume, declaiming to his fellow orgiasts, declares the state of permanent happiness in Eldorado. While the people, again in costume, dance the samba, the senator declares that neither hunger nor illiteracy exist in Eldorado's best of all possible worlds. "*Transe*," in Portugese, simultaneously connotes frenetic movement, personal delirium and collective hysteria. It evokes as well the trance of African religious cults, like the music of *candomble* which opens and closes the film. At the same time, the apparent movement of carnival (and of populist politics) is shown as alienated and factitious, a dead-end frenzy. The word *transe* itself conveys this paradoxical simultaneity of stasis and movement. The carnival is seen through disabused eyes, and the hysteria is ultimately mastered by the distancing technique. The film alternates distanced analysis with psychic explosions. Like Paolo, the spectator goes in and out of the transe.

TERRE EM TRANSE is a provocative, aggressive, intentionally difficult film, an advanced lesson in reading political and cinematographic significations. It consistently violates our expectations; it withholds spectacle when the story demands it, and denies romance where plot conventions would require it. Even its orgies are anti-erotic. Where we expect sharp political definition, the film gives us poetic, imagistic freedom. It creates a world of systematic contradiction, between and within the personnages, between sound and image, between cinematographic styles. Brutal ruptures in editing keep the spectator off-balance, incapable of identifying in the conventional way. For Glauber Rocha, to have proceeded in any other way would have been radically compromised through the very artistic codes by which it had been mediated. TERRA EM TRANSE is a piece of revolutionary pedagogy. While its methodology and vision are Marxist, it offers no correct line or pat answers. The solution lies in *our* becoming conscious.

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[1] A word on the prototypes for the political figures in TERRA EM TRANSE. Porfirio Diaz, named after the Mexican dictator, embodies the Latin-American version of Iberic despotism, while his political career parallels that of the Brazilian politician Carlos Lacerda, evolving from youthful leftism to an almost religious anti-communism. Vieira, for his part, combines the traits of a number of Brazilian populist leaders. Like Miguel Arraes, he is a provincial governor elected with the support of students and peasants. Like Joao Goulart, he is a gaucho and is deposed by a right-wing coup. His description of himself as a self-made politician recalls Janio Quadros, while his speech of resignation echoes Vargas' famous suicide letter denouncing international conspiracies. Sara and her militant friends represent the communist party, whose policy it then was (and still is) to support populist politicians like Vieira, seeing itself as a kind of midwife for a bourgeois revolution which would logically precede an authentic proletarian one. EXPLINT (Company of International Exploitation) obviously representas foreign (mainly North American) economic forces, and especially multinational corporations, which were involved in the coup against Joao Goulart.

[2] A word on the English subtitles for TERRA EM TRANSE. The English titles for TERRA EM TRANSE are incompetent at best and disastrous at worst. When Paolo speaks in poetry for example, the titles not only do not translate his words into poetry--that is admittedly difficult--but they do not communicate the fact that he is speaking in poetry, with the result that the spectator takes what is in fact heightened, lyrical speech for an inept attempt at naturalistic dialogue. At other times, the text is distorted or simply impoverished. "I abandon myself to the vain exercise of poetry" becomes "I, for example, write poetry." □

ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST

An Aerial View of the Nest

--William Van Wert

Milos Forman's adaptation of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is an updated ideological blend of KING OF HEARTS and COOL HAND LUKE: the American anti-hero who "won't play ball" with the system, who is destined to self-sacrifice so that others might abstain from playing ball, too. Yet, despite the fact that the film is a one-role virtuoso vehnicle for Jack Nicholson as Randall Patrick McMurphy, the impact of the film lies elsewhere.

Let's start with the stereotypes. The depiction of minority groups in the film is uniformly coded and oppressive in its macho coloring. Most of the ward workers in the hospital are blacks--specifically, black males who conform to one of two types: the Washington type, who thinly disguises his scorn toward Nurse Ratched, who enjoys inflicting physical punishments on the men and who enters into a power struggle of verbal virility with McMurphy; and the Turkle type, the older, submissive black who can be "bought" with booze and a white woman. Between these two extremes there are no images of blacks in the film.

Likewise, the same two types apply for the women. Either they are, like Nurse Ratched, cold, calculating, cruel and unfeeling in their devotion to inhumane therapies or they are, like McMurphy's "girlfriend" and her friend, pretty, dumb and easily manipulated by the males around them. Again, there is no inbetween image of women in the film, which is to say that there are no real women. No real blacks, no real women, only white males and their fantasies.

The one exception to the above stereotypes is the Chief, the only Native American in this morality play. In Kesey's novel the Chief is the narrator, the filter through which we view McMurphy and the others. Thus, the novel is also a plea from the Native American subculture, from the most oppressed of America's minorities.

The film carries no such plea. In the novel the Chief ultimately inherits the legacy of his father, one who died flying over the cuckoo's nest. The father is alluded to momentarily in the film, but it is clear that here the Chief inherits from McMurphy, not from his father.

The elevation of McMurphy from catalyst to prime mover creates a fundamental ideology in the film, very thinly disguised as mental wards and therapy games.

In essence, then, the film is a metaphor for dying white male potency, an elegy to vanishing sexual prowess. The metaphor and elegy are not unlike those to be found in the films of Sam Peckinpah, Robert Aldrich, Richard Serafian and Robert Altman. All the participants are male, all who can communicate are "voluntary" (they have committed themselves), almost all who can communicate have sexual problems. What does R. P. McMurphy bring to this community of psychological invalids? By his own admission, his entire life has been devoted to fighting and fucking, the aggressive male pursuit of happiness. His adversaries in the mental ward are monsters of invisible Freudian analysis, administered by castrating females and blacks: verbally by Nurse Ratched, physically by the blacks. The mental ward becomes a kind of awkward microcosm. The real issues at stake are not those of deciphering what's sane and what's not, what's therapeutic and what's not, but

rather what is the white male's dream and what is not.[1]

McMurphy offers the "inmates" tough talk and quick action of the variety espoused by Cassevetes in HUSBANDS. He hustles cigarettes in the poker games, wagers on uprooting the drinking fountain in the shower stalls for a breakaway, teaches them how to play basketball, gives them a first-hand account of the World Series, takes them fishing on a stolen boat, gets them drunk and gives them women. Instead of the analytical "discussions" with Nurse Ratched, McMurphy proposes a kind of bioenergetics play therapy, both in and out of the ward. Instead of the "mother transfer" by which most of the men can re-become boys in Nurse Ratched's care, McMurphy proposes not a transfer of responsibilities but rather a rejection of responsibilities in favor of the male fantasies of sports, booze and easy women. This sacrificial macho-Messiah cures the gays, deflowers the virgins and makes the mute speak.

This ultimate male bonding is only effective when shared. It becomes obvious as the film progresses that McMurphy is neither interested in self-improvement nor anxious for escape. The outside world is as much a prison as the prison itself for him. Clearly, he is partial to, and in love with, the "nuts" he befriends. The disguise that this friendship takes is that of an alternate asylum. When questioned by the man at the docks, McMurphy responds that he and the inmates are all "doctors" from the asylum, the reversal of roles being clearly more important than any differences in the roles themselves. Rather than make his own escape, McMurphy stays with the men, knowing that they will be caught. He even abbreviates his sex when one of the men has a fish on the line. His second opportunity for escape is equally self-aborted. He gives his "girlfriend" to Billy, the stuttering virgin obsessed by his mother. Then, unexplainably, he and the Chief, along with the other inmates, are found sleeping in the morning by an irate Nurse Ratched. It is as though he never wanted to escape in the first place. His decision to remain in both instances is weighted in terms of this male bonding of white males, in terms of liberating them from physical dominance (the blacks) and psychological dominance (women like Nurse Ratched). The price of this liberation is the impossibility of any return to analytical therapy and voluntary self-incarceration, as evidenced by Billy (who commits suicide) and the Chief (who smothers McMurphy with a pillow and escapes).

The ideological seriousness of this struggle is conveyed by the typing of the adversaries. But the plausibility of the struggle, that which makes CUCKOO'S NEST a very powerful film despite its stereotyping, comes from the self-restraint imposed by Forman on both his camera and his editing and the freedom given to Nicholson and the other "patients" to act and improvise. The camera is steady but seldom intrusive; the editing, except for one or two voice-over links, does not call attention to itself. Close-ups are frequently used, but seldom are they overly dramatized to convey what the dialogue cannot. Given the time to act and the room to develop a scene, Nicholson and the others establish a kind of male bonding or camaraderie beyond the script. The hoopla of the imaginary World Series is an example of this kind of close-knit free acting, in which lines like Nicholson's gleeful "Somebody get me a fuckin' weiner before my throat gives out" are delivered as "throw-away" lines.

Thus, even when it is politically questionable, this image of cuckolded masculinity is at moments downright appealing, and it remains a seemingly durable myth. Yet, one must ultimately wonder why, given a distance of some 14 years, Forman did not place a critical perspective on Kesey's tract. Perhaps he still feels ill at ease with American cultural values and mores. Perhaps he was content to bypass the implications of Kesey's novel in favor of Hollywood's preference for the obvious. Neither reason would explain the political naivete of the film, especially in light of the lay person's raised consciousness concerning blacks, women and alternative therapies to psychoanalysis in the years since the novel was first published.

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[1]The oppression of mental patients is a real political problem, not simply a convenient metaphor, as Kesey and Forman would have it, for thwarted (white) male supremacy. By and large, the administrators and doctors who dominate such institutions are white ruling-class males, while female patients outnumber their male counterparts two to one. Accordingly, men dictate the standards of "health" in such environments--quite naturally asserting their class prerogatives to quell expressions of stridency, militancy, autonomy or other "hostile" reactions from female inmates. The work force of attendants and nurses receive token compensation for the very sizable services they perform; mostly blacks, latinos and working-class whites, they are alternatively patronized and bullied by the elitist corps of doctors. (So it seems that the workers' abuse of the patients is a logical consequence of their place in the rigid pecking order of the hospital.) Rather than recognizing these facts, Forman chose to reverse the terms of the power dialectic--employing a strategy of "blaming the victim."

--The Editors □

Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?

Depression Follies Of 1976

--Judith Taylor and Frank Stricker

> Hollywood would help the nation's fundamental institutions escape unscathed by attempting to keep alive the myth and wonderful fantasy of a mobile and classless society, by focusing on the endless possibilities for individual success, by turning social evil into personal evil and making the New Deal into a veritable leading man.
>
> Andrew Bergman, *We're in the Money: Depression America and Its Films*

> The one thing this movie does is entertain.
>
> James Bacon, L.A. *Herald-Examiner*, used in ad for BROTHER, CAN YOU SPARE A DIME?

In the 1950's U.S. capitalism experienced the most severe and protracted economic crisis in its history. In 1934, five years after the stock market crash, 25% of the work force was unemployed. Six years later, on the eve of World War II, the figure still stood at 15%. Yet throughout the depression decade, 60 to 70 million movie tickets were sold every week. Life's daily struggles were forgotten for a few moments in a movie theater. There on the Silver Screen, fans watched LITTLE CAESAR, CAMILLE, GOLD DIGGERS OF 1933, SCARFACE, BRINGING UP BABY, MR. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN, KING KONG, COCOANUTS, RED DUST, and BROADWAY MELODY OF 1938.

Movies in the thirties reacted to social and economic problems in an ideological way. Depression films are very topical. Even "escapist" musicals have depression motifs. Musical numbers like "We're in the Money," and "The Forgotten Man" (GOLD DIGGERS OF 1933--Mervyn Leroy) have specific references to the country's economic situation. There is even a rousing production number boosting the New Deal's Recovery Program (FOOTLIGHT PARADE, 1933--Lloyd Bacon). But even though they use topical issues, most depression movies either smooth over class conflict by asserting that all people, rich and poor alike, are really the same "under the skin" (Frank Capra's IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT, 1934; Gregory LaCava's MY MAN GODFREY, 1936), or reproduce the Great American Success Story, even if the thirties' hero is a gangster.[1] Films that are uncompromisingly pessimistic like Mervyn Leroy's I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG (1932) or that offer alternatives to individualism and capitalism like Vidor's OUR DAILY BREAD (1934) are the exception.[2] When Americans went to the movies it was usually to see screwball comedies, gangster/G-Men morality dramas, horror films, and lavish musicals. Along with F.D.R.'s New Deal programs, these films functioned to maintain a suffering people's loyalty to American capitalism. Movies did not simply "mirror" the facts of the crisis; they distorted them and their causes, and thereby helped to shape people's attitudes and activities.

A penetrating and enlightening film could have been made about the ideological function of depression movies. Philippe Mora's "documentary," BROTHER, CAN YOU SPARE A DIME, is not that film. In fact, BROTHER serves to mystify and confuse present-day filmgoers--not only about the depression and the relation of that period to its films, but about the American system today.

Mora's approach becomes apparent in the film's first moments, which function as an introductory frame to the thirties. A strange little boy, hugging and puffing, reels off the names of the forty-eight states in the same breath. With this, Mora is announcing that the film is going to treat the thirties as some sort of lark, an absurdity trip. The cinematic remains of the thirties are like this weird little boy. They are a curiosity, valued because old now, rare and odd, even camp, like an antique Coca-Cola sign.

The next series of film clips continues the tone of absurdity: Indians, bison, a farmer, a tap-dancing Black convict flash by in rapid succession. What does this mean? Is it another testament to the irrationality of things? Is it a rebus?--could some incredibly devoted film buff identify these clips and put them together to signify something? Whatever (we don't know), by the time the film really starts dealing with the thirties, the audience senses that the mood and tone is one of nostalgia and absurdity

If this is all that absurd and camp, why do we take BROTHER seriously? BROTHER is an example of the view people in capitalist society get of their past through media. BROTHER is not merely "entertainment"; underneath its seemingly carefree and arbitrary surface lie assumptions and ideas about the nature of reality, political and historical reality. BROTHER deals with a serious economic and social crisis in American capitalism in a superficial and almost lighthearted way. Through its technique and choice of images, it makes the statement that the thirties, a period in which the majority of Americans suffered tremendously, is seen mainly as an amusing media trip. Already confused by decades of mystification around the Depression, the audience of BROTHER walks out of the theater totally befuddled.

The film runs in roughly chronological fashion from the crash to World War II. It opens its survey of the depression decade with a truly wondrous Hollywood image of a giant ticker tape machine exploding and showering worthless paper upon a terrified and helpless crowd. Next we see Jimmy Cagney trying to cover his debts. What follows then are newsreel clips of real police shoving real people and shots of the unemployed. The film then cuts back to the Hollywood version of reality--dejected, middle-class Pop comes home with a job and Frankie Darro will

soon be one of the WILD BOYS OF THE ROAD (William Wellman, 1933).

This gives you a sense of the technique and the meaning of BROTHER. Mora jumbles many different levels of film reality: newsreels, photographs, Hollywood films reflecting historical events, Hollywood films about making movies, outtakes, promos, and home movies. These clips are crosscut continuously, often so subtly and smoothly that the audience can hardly tell where one stops and another begins. We see real shots of New York streets, then a scene of passengers in an el train; all of a sudden King Kong looms up to smash it. Reality turns into fantasy so quickly that we can hardly keep up. In another sequence, an FDR speech is treated in three quick cuts: FDR speaking melts into a real family gathered around the radio listening to his speech, which in turn shifts to Jimmy Cagney going over to the radio to hear that we have nothing to fear but fear itself. All this occurs without a break in the soundtrack.

The editing is quite clever and professional, but what does Mora mean by it? Is Mora pointing out how movies reflect reality, or how media comments on its culture? We think not. Juxtaposition in BROTHER is not primarily used as a tool of analysis which enlightens audiences about causes and effects or relations between two things. Rather, Mora uses this technique to fuse reality and Hollywood fiction. He deliberately makes no distinction between history and ideology, between what really happens and what Hollywood makes of reality. In Mora's view of the world, everything is mere media: images, roles, surfaces. Whatever the camera catches is real.

Moreover, there is no narration at all in this film. Except for section titles ("Mr. Churchill Visits New York," "G-Men Get Guns," "Hard Times Hit Parade"), audiences are on their own with the screen images and dialogues. Unless they are real film buffs, they may not realize when BROTHER is presenting a newsreel clip or a Hollywood film. To Mora, it hardly matters: all media are the message.

And dammit, in spite of ourselves, we enjoyed parts of the film. Mora has assembled some wonderful rare footage--historical clips as well as Hollywood movies. The charismatic presences of Gable, Cagney, FDR, and Huey Long flash electrically across the screen. Now old or dead, then they were flowing, successful, alive. And as riveting as some of the historical film footage is, it is the glamorous media presences Mora makes us remember when we walk out of the theater, not the hungry, homeless, sometimes angry people of the thirties. The Hollywood films and stars overshadow real people and historical events in the film. Anyone who doesn't know much about the depression must leave the theater thinking Jimmy Cagney, who makes at least fourteen appearances, was, next to FDR, the most important figure of that period. To Mora, it matters not whether one was a political figure of great power and the other an actor; they were both media stars.

To his credit, Mora has put together some effective footage of the Depression's victims. There are newsreel clips of the Bonus Army (for which the song, "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" was written in 1932), which marched to Washington to demand a soldier's bonus and was routed by the army. There are very moving scenes of the poor, urban and rural, Black and white. One of the most touching sequences is a series of shots of dejected Black people, with Billie Holiday on the soundtrack, singing "Nobody Loves You When You're Down and Out" (one of the few times when juxtaposition is used clearly). These shots of the human toll of the depression along with the songs of Holiday and the Dust Bowl ballads of Woody Guthrie are the most authentic moments in the film.

But what about the people not down and out but up and at 'em? Unionization, especially the rise of the C.I.O. in response to workers' demands for organization, is barely treated.

There is an exciting newsclip of police and vigilantes battling and pickets fighting strikebreakers, but it must be confusing to people who don't know the history of the thirties. They might merely wonder what all the violence was about. And the film ignores the important role of Communists in the C.I.O. Instead, there is some very unpleasant footage of a Communist speaker on a soap box, mechanically haranguing a bored crowd. This clip is dragged on interminably. Everyone in the audience laughed at it and we suspect that Mora selected the most damaging and ludicrous piece he could find.

Closer to the home of the dream machine, the film devotes a segment to the film industry, entitled "Hurray for Hollywood." This is treated in a lighthearted manner, mixing a rousing rendition of the song, "Hollywood," with home movies of the stars at play. But in fact, while the stars were playing and singing, movie industry capitalists were engaged in vicious attacks on popular movements. In 1934, almost a million Californians voted for Upton Sinclair and his EPIC program for cooperative production. Sinclair lost his try for the governorship, but he might have won were it not for the hate campaign organized against him. Movie moguls, led by Louis B. Mayer, offered anti-EPIC "newsreels" free to movie houses. This was the reality behind the Hollywood dream factory--a particularly overt form of film as propaganda in defense of capitalism. Although clips of the campaign are available, there is not a word of it in BROTHER.

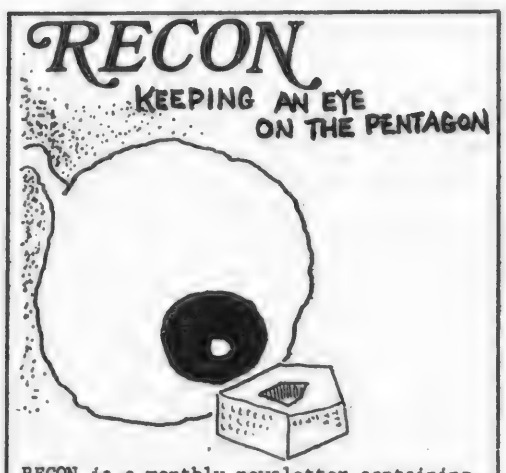
The film's biggest "star," of course, is the most charismatic figure of the thirties, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. We see FDR with his family in a homey campaign promo; FDR as a witty, combative commencement speaker; FDR, paralyzed from the waist down, swimming; FDR explaining why he must run for an unprecedented third term. Mora is clearly fascinated with Roosevelt's charming public persona. Indeed, he is taken in by it, for images are reality to Mora. It is as though the carefully presented public FDR were the whole truth about the real person and his historical role.

But behind the public FDR, there was in fact another person. Behind the "friend of the worker" was the president who did not, till the very end, support the Wagner Act for collective bargaining. And he was the first president to manipulate sound and sight media to win popular loyalty. And it was FDR whose solution to the depression was the N.R.A.--the Blue Eagle--which handed control of prices and production over to big business.

We do not find out from this film how the NRA worked, or whether it ended the depression (it didn't). Indeed, we do not learn that it was not eight years of the New Deal but World War II that finally brought prosperity to the United States. Instead of facts like these, we are given the Hollywood version of things. Not long after FDR's inauguration, we see a stirring Hollywood production number: "We're Out of the Red--Depression's Over." In a film like BROTHER which has no commentary, this is extremely misleading. It is as though the media were reality: FDR's public image is FDR and if Hollywood says it is so, the depression is over.

BROTHER does not close with the end of the depression decade and the beginning of World War II, but rather with disconnected clips of more recent history: JFK's assassination, the astronauts preparing for launch, Nixon's resignation, Ford's inauguration. (The Vietnamese War is not included. Apparently there is a limit to what can be reduced to absurdity.) One by one, these familiar and well-understood images flash by. It is impossible to say for sure what this ending means, but we can hazard a guess: our recent history, which we, the present audience, still understand, will someday be the raw material for another nostalgia trip. Forty years from now Watergate and the Recession of the 70's will be a fun trip just as BROTHER is today.

What is dangerous about a film like BROTHER is that it insists that we see the world as absurd and therefore meaningless. Rather than arousing our anger and concern or teaching us to have some understanding, or at least a reasonable point of view about the thirties, BROTHER leaves us detached: possibly amused, but cynical. If our present concerns will eventually turn into a jumble of senseless, quaint old film clips, why worry, why try to understand? Why worry about the current economic crisis? About higher prices and unemployment? Years from now, when it's all in the past, its meaning will dissolve into mere style, camp, like the Depression as presented by Mora. □



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AMERICA AS ENTERTAINMENT

-- Thomas Waugh

Michael Wood, America in the Movies (NY: Basic, 1975). $10.00 hardcover.

American movies have always attracted attention and analysis from non-experts from other fields. Film criticism is constantly enriched by these contributions from other disciplines and from lay opinion. And it is to Michael Wood's credit, an outsider on two counts both as an Englishman and as a literary critic-teacher, that his new book on the Hollywood movies of the forties and fifties, *America in the Movies*, adds considerably to this rich tradition of cross-fertilization.

One benefit accruing from our constant exposure to outsiders' forays into the territory of film studies is the constant renewal of our sense of movies as popular culture. The tendency to lose this perspective with its many implications is a serious trap for film scholars, as the field continues to resemble more and more a walled academic enclave without any reference to the outside world.

Thus, although *Film Comment*'s recent complaint about the *New York Times*'neglect of Robin Wood may be justified in itself, there is no excuse for *Film Comment*'s editor Richard Corliss' outrage at the *Times'* attention to Michael Wood's book. For Corliss this coverage of the work of a non-specialist represents a backward step in the media's film consciousness, the return to a pre-sixties "notion" of the movie as social phenomenon, valuable mainly for What it Tells Us About Ourselves: in Andrew Sarris's words, "cinema as mirror rather than window."[1] The actual regressive tendency in film culture these days is, as we all know, much closer to Corliss than the *New York Times*, but that's another issue.

In any case, Michael Wood's interest in his subject is precisely and unapologetically that deplored by Corliss, the movie as social phenomenon, and What it Tells us About Ourselves. In fact, using Sarris' image, Wood calls his book "a session at the mirror."

This is not to say that Wood's perspective as an outsider is without liabilities. We have what is admittedly a foreigner's view of American culture and what's more that of a foreigner who lives in New York. And the book is built upon layers of the strained, impetuous generalizations about the American national character and American history which Americans themselves are reluctant to make, not because they can't arrive at them but because they know things aren't so simple. Yet in Wood's hands they are stimulating rather than simplistic. Wood's background as an observer and critic within the terrain of High Culture is more troublesome--he is occasionally guilty of the kind of condescension towards popular film which ought to have vanished entirely from the cultural landscape since the acceptance of auteurism (not to mention the rise of bourgeois democratic ideology). For example, we have this shocking admission of his bias: "..and we shouldn't listen too seriously to the siren voices of those critics who claim big things for Hollywood as art." Or his refusal to accept Hitchcock as the creator of either "films that come up to scratch (most of them don't)" or "an oeuvre embodying a rich and coherent view of life." Instead Hitchcock contains "moments", "perfect emblems of anxiety." This is either an embarrassing cop-out on Wood's part or a failure to approach the basic aesthetic problematic of popular art with any objectivity whatsoever. Too often Wood resorts to a critical vocabulary which, however justified it may be in specific instances, has too many unpleasant echoes of generations of High Culture critics sneering at the diversions of the masses, a vocabulary as imprecise as it is sharply judgmental, including words like "banal," "trite," "sentimental," "flamboyant," and "clumsy." In addition Wood relies heavily for his inspiration on writers who like himself approach the movies from outside the field of film studies proper, writers like Barbara Deming, Stanley Cavell, and Lawrence Alloway. For all these liabilities, and though he comes nowhere near the film erudition of a Sarris or a Durgnat, Wood's perspective is full of freshness and perspicuity, his thinking is persuasive and clear, his style is at once journalistic and scholarly, above all readable.

Wood's session at the mirror is then an engrossing one. As with his forebear in the illustrious tradition of mirror-reading, Siegfried Kracauer, one wishes constantly to quibble with detail. (Can we possibly swallow whole his assertion that "the coherent world of the movies doesn't really assume its full and final form until 1939 or a little earlier"?) But the overall thrust is impressive. For Wood, "any Hollywood movie, however trivial and whatever its intentions, is a text for a rather special kind of social history: the study of what might be called the back of the American mind, or perhaps the back of certain states of mind." That is not to say that the films are coherent texts in contemporary ideologies. Quite the contrary. They are myths or rather fragments of myths. They are contradictory "clusters of worries" and Wood sees his job as "excavating buried worries." Here his debt to Lévi-Struass is an obvious one; *America in the Movies* is one of the most instructive and accessible applications of Lévi-Straussian theory to Hollywood since Peter Wollen's *Signs and Meanings in the Cinema*.[2] And, with Wood's decidedly non-auteurist approach, it provides a valuable balance to the convergence of auteurism and structuralism achieved by Wollen. Like Lévi-Strauss, Wood sees a myth as a logical model for overcoming a contradiction, a "semi-transparent mask of a contradiction." But of course Hollywood does not deal with the contradictions it senses in American life in coherent patterns any more than the myths analyzed by Lévi-Strauss did for their parent societies. Wood's major theme is that the worries are raised in confusing, half-conscious and contradictory structures. Movies are the dramatizations of "our semi-secret concerns and contradictions," reflections of collective anxieties which often serve as outlets for those anxieties without resolving them or even giving them articulate expression. Often the very richness of an American movie arises from the confusion in its "muddled, clumsily overlapping, and unexamined" half-attention to the issues it raises. "A major function of popular movies," Wood argues, "is to avoid facing the bogeys they raise."

The patterns that Wood constantly sees emerging from Hollywood's clusters of worries are basic Lévi-Straussian antimonic units, those pairs of opposing concepts, images, or actions which Levi-Strauss sees at the root of all analytic thought. Again and again he points to a film raising a problem and resolving it on the level of the narrative proper while undercutting this resolution in the opposite direction with what Wood calls its "weight" or its "energies." For example, the epic spectacles of the fifties gave surface legitimation to the oppressed masses (Christians in BEN-HUR, or the Jews in THE TEN COMMANDMENTS) but their real energies are irresistably attracted to the pageantry and spectacle of the Roman or Egyptian oppressors. Similarly "problem" films betray their liberal concern by inevitably making the victims of a lynching innocent or their black characters exemplary middle-class Sydney Poitiers. The heroes of action pictures such as CHINA (1943) or LIVES OF A BENGAL LANCER (1935) or westerns such as THE SHEEPMAN (1958) make a belated gesture towards community only after they have established the primacy of what Wood sees as the American virtue of selfishness. In a brilliant variation of the method of rooting out oppositions, Wood sees the frigid "ice-maiden" icon of the forties (for example, Ingrid Bergman in SPELLBOUND finally inflamed by the right man) as a kind of inverse echo of the Rita Hayworth *femme fatal*, ultimate innocence in the luscious guise of guilt.

Wood finds similar patterns in each of the seven "worry-clusters" (or generic, thematic, or iconic problematics) he examines in the book, each in its own chapter: the ideology and psychology of individualism (Bogart as the archetype of American moral isolationism); the innocence-guilt configuration of female typology (Rita Hayworth the model here); the myth of success ("the deadly curse of being the fastest gun around"), *film noir*'s "discreet, disturbing onslaught on the very notion of visual evidence" (Hitchcock being the chief exploiter of "the promise of paranoia inherent in the medium's total reliance on the way things look"); the problems of "Problem" movies (with their surface adherence to yet ultimate betrayal of commitment); the too-protesting exuberance of MGM musicals and the over-confident skill of Gene Kelly; and finally the epics (the profits in waste, and the doom lurking around the optimism of spectacle).

Yet the patterns don't always fit. Wood runs into problems which suggest that even outsiders need to do their homework. For example, one of his contentions about the *film noir* seems way off target, that is, his perception that "the scare that lurks in those shadowy sets is...the experience of class, the sense of America...as a place of high walls and closed doors." No doubt a certain sub-category of *noir* can be described like this, but as a blanket generalization his analysis doesn't fit, particularly since of the three-film paradigm he discusses as evidence for this observation one film is at most a greatly hybridized version of *noir*, MILDRED PIERCE, and the other two are admittedly sentimental melodramas (NOW VOYAGER and NIGHT SONG).

Even if my demurrer here is a matter of interpretation, Wood bogs down irretrievably in his chapter on the musical. Here a blatant lack of historical and sociological perspective damages his discussion of the decline of the MGM musical in the fifties. As with the *film noir* he traces a progression through a shabby paradigm of three films, all Kelly-Donen musicals, and expands the pattern he detects to a generalized summation of the whole genre. Wood sees Kelly's flaunted technical virtuosity together with the "lurking distress" in IT'S ALWAYS FAIR WEATHER! (there is altogether too much lurking in this book) as a mirror image of the decline in national confidence during the Eisenhower years. His view of Kelly is as a "portrait of America before the plague of locusts which came in the shape of Hiss, Korea, the Rosenbergs, McCarthy, and the rest," and his conclusion is that "what killed off the vivid musical of those years was a growing failure of music in the life outside the movies. By the mid-fifties, it was beginning to seem impossible to break into a general song and dance in America, even metaphorically..." are highly subjective assessments to say the least. This is Wood's most serious lapse into that pop historicism which is now undermining our sense of the fifties as much as the Depression mythology has deformed our sense of the thirties (*Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?*). Wood would have done better to look at the decline of the studio system itself, the breakup of the block-booking system (upon which I would argue that the traditional movie musical depended to a large extent), the reduction of the domestic audience by more than half during the fifties, and of course the rise of television and the contemporary hit parade. There are important aesthetic and economic distinctions between the high-budget, self-conscious prestige musical of the fifties, and the assembly line products of the earlier decades, not to mention compositions of their respective audiences, which must be considered alongside any alleged alteration in national mood. Also relevant to this issue would be the view of Herbert Gans that in the 1950's a lower middle "taste culture" replaced low "taste culture" as the predominant American level of cultural expression.[3]

Wood shows a similar shortsightedness in his sense of the musical on purely aesthetic terms. For him, the finest achievements of the musical have been within the integrated operetta-spawned tradition, initiated by the Astaire-Rogers cycle and the early book musicals such as LOVE ME TONIGHT and climaxing in the Minnelli-Donen-Kelly masterworks. He has only contempt for the other great tradition of the musical whose roots are in vaudeville and whose structure is serial rather than unitary, exemplified by the early Warners musicals or the "Broadway melody" cycles through the thirties, forties, and even early fifties. The latter, he intones, elevating a personal preference to the level of aesthetic principle, "blatantly puts music where there is none, providing an arrant compensation for a dreary lack of music in our daily doings. The other kind hints that music is everywhere, scattered about if we will only look and listen." One suspects that there is an element of Wood's anti-popular prejudice operating here as criteria from one "taste culture" are foisted indiscriminately into another. It certainly never seems to occur to him that the MGM musicals with their air of self-conscious artistry and their prestigious ballets may have failed precisely because they lacked the roots in popular acceptance which the earlier less pretentious vaudeville-style musicals relied on through the two decades of their existence.

Ultimately, *America in the Movies*, for all its charm, suffers from the same lack of historical perspective; it can really be seen only as a preliminary sketch for a study that one hopes Wood will complete. If its insights are appealing, they are tantalizingly short, impressionistic, and lacking in scholarly authority. Wood needs to rely less on shaky paradigms of film history, like the two already mentioned, and refer to many, many more movies if he wishes his generalizations to hold water. And his thinking needs a thorough grounding in the sociological history of the medium and its audience.

Perhaps most frustrating of all is his analysis of the collapse of the female hegemony in movie iconography that happened about 1950, a topic discussed by Molly Haskell and Marjorie Rosen, two feminist film historians to whom Wood owes a decisive (and readily acknowledged) debt. Wood mentions at one point a pre-war sociologist's observation that women play a predominant role in moviegoing decisionmaking but only connects this tenuously with the progressive female typology he locates at that time. It seems obvious that the relation between the image of women in movies and the shifting patterns of their relative power in the Hollywood audience is an important area for further study. Certainly the severe alterations which the fifties effected upon the automatic moviegoing habits of the thirties and forties must have influenced this power as much as the return of the G.I.'s. And surely the re-emergence of the female hegemony in television iconography, unassailable to this day, from Lucy to Maude, is something that needs to be studied in relation to the disappearance of "strong women" (as my feminist friends call them) from the larger screen, as well as the

nature of women's roles in family television-viewing priorities.

Each of Wood's chapters has its share of insights which are cut short in the same way by the absence of historical specificity in his terms of reference. Although he correctly relates the well-intentioned reticence of the "Problem" films to "middle-class American liberalism in general," he fails to make a similarly precise connection to his larger theme of "the virtues of selfishness." Here, although he does repeat Barbara Deming's allusion to Eisenhower's justification of the Vietnamese intervention on both selfish and altruistic grounds, he contains the implications of the selfish individualism of the Bogart-Cooper iconography within a zealously Kracauerian discussion of the American national character, omitting the obvious extension to a specific class ideology. Wood rightly complains about many Marxist analyses of popular culture as being "too conspiratorial and too literal," but this does not let him off the hook.

One final reservation along these same lines must be registered in response to the book's opening discussion of what Wood calls the "Hollywood style." For him this means "modest excess," "swagger and exaggeration," and "broad and knowing flamboyance." (The book's subtitle, *Santa Maria, It Had Slipped My Mind!*" is Wood's favorite example of the "fullblown" Hollywood style, a line uttered by Tyrone Power in THE MARK OF ZORRO (1940)). Although this discussion, adapted from a 1973 article in *New York Review of Books*--Wood's customary podium--is strangely out of place in this book and hardly relevant to Wood's major themes, it needs careful analysis. Even if such a style, embracing all of Hollywood's products during those years, can be said to exist, rather than a number of specific genre or studio styles, which is more likely, the constituents of such a style need to be carefully identified and empirically described with much more seriousness than Wood shows in this opening chapter. And these constituents need to be balanced against properties of popular art in general and purged of any subjective, retrospective coloration brought to them by Wood who, after all, teaches modernist literature at Columbia, peppers his writings with quotes from *Finnegans Wake*, and is light years away from the sensibility of the audience at which Tyrone Power aimed his line.

In short, without a sense of the cultural and sociological foundations of the film industry during the forties and fifties, the very real danger of a session at the mirror is that it will be an evasive and superficial one.... The bogey raised by Wood in such a perceptive manner is ultimately avoided, in much the same manner as Hollywood's own masterful bogey-avoiding act so skilfully described in this otherwise disappointing book.

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[1]Richard Corliss, "No-Man's Land," *Film Comment* (November-December 1975) p. 64.

[2]Another exemplar of an insightful use of Levi-Straussian paired oppositions to reveal patterns of class conflict in American cinema can be found in Charles Eckert's "The Anatomy of a Proletarian Film: Warner's MARKED WOMAN," *Film Quarterly* (Winter 1973-74), pp. 10-24.

[3]Herbert J. Gans, *Popular Culture and High Culture (New York, 1974) p. 89.* □

MS. CLEAN

-- Robert Rosen

Richard Meran Barsam, *Filmguide to Triumph of the Will* (Bloomington: Indiana U. Press, 1975) 72 pp. & filmography, bibliography, rental into. & notes; $6.95 cloth; $1.95 paper.

"Once rockets go up,
Who cares where they come down;
That's not my department,"
Says Werner von Braun.
--Tom Lehrer

TRIUMPH OF THE WILL causes great confusion in liberal intellectual circles.[1] Some passionately defend it as great art; with equal passion others denounce it as Nazi propaganda. Clearly it is both, and this is what confuses. For much traditional liberal thinking about art and artists is based on the following assumptions: that an act of artistic creation is not necessarily a political act; that one can respond to, study and judge art purely in "objective" aesthetic terms; that great art somehow liberates and humanizes us. And these assumptions come under stress when one is confronted with a film commissioned by Hitler, shown in every German cinema in 1935[2] and that *der Fuehrer* himself called "an outstanding an unparalleled tribute to the strength and beauty of our movement."[3]

Perhaps because of discomfort with such stress, most critics have eagerly accepted Riefenstahl's laundered versions of her own past. Consistently she has opened her archives and her heart to writers--Richard Meran Barsam, author of *Filmguide to Triumph of the Will* included--in an effort, as Barsam sympathetically puts it, "to create a climate in which the public might fairly evaluate her work" (p. 19). Susan Sontag,[4] Hans Barkhausen[5] and others have demonstrated that this effort has been a pastoral symphony of lies, distortions and misleading generalizations. For example, Barkhausen shows that the Nazi government, not the International Olympic Committee, commissioned and (through a dummy company) financed Riefenstahl's 1938 OLYMPIA. Further, TRIUMPH OF THE WILL was not, as Riefenstahl insists, "only a documentary," "purely historical...*film verite,*"[6] for the 1934 Nazi Party Rally it glamorizes "was, from the beginning, conceived as the set of a film spectacle" (Sontag, p. 24). And despite all the obstacles she wants us to believe Goebbels and others put in her way, TRIUMPH OF THE WILL was "made with the fullest cooperation any film maker has ever had from any government" (Sontag, p. 24). In all, Riefenstahl made five non-fiction films for Hitler, not the two she claims. This is just a small sampling of Riefenstahl's deceptions. Yet, to cite a recent example, the 1973 WCBS (New York) "Camera Three" two-part program on Riefenstahl, made with her cooperation, follows her line completely. "It is," Amos Vogel writes of the program, "as if 'Triumph' itself was innocuous and 'a problem' only because of those who 'chose' to see it as a symbol of Fascism."[7] By now, Riefenstahl herself may very well believe the many stories she fells about her past. The naivete and ludicrousness of the following suggest this and must embarass even her most ardent defenders:

> I only know that I have a great love for beauty. The form taken by beauty, and not only its exterior form but its interior form. I only know how happy it makes me when I meet good men, simple men. But it repulses me so much to find myself faced with false men that it is a thing to which I have never been able to give artistic form.[8]

Unfortunately, this sort of statement has led very few to question the truth of her other assertions.

Though no willing dupe like the Camera Three filmmakers, neither is Barsam an impassioned iconoclast like Sontag. He hints that Riefenstahl might be mistaken in some of her claims, and even contradicts her outright a few times, but he seems reluctant to follow through and expose her vast mythmaking. Barsam quotes Riefenstahl as saying TRIUMPH OF THE WILL was made with "very primitive means" (p. 23) and suggests this is an understatement by listing her crew and equipment; but he does not tell us that in an effort to minimize the support he had from Hitler, Riefenstahl has claimed that she had "only two cameras at my disposal,"[9] when in fact the real number, as Barsam gives it, is thirty. (The film makes obvious that whoever operated those "two cameras" must have been very enthusiastic about Hitler to run fast enough to shoot what they did.) Of her coming together with Hitler, Barsam says, with the utmost tact: "In an attempt to win power in 1932 , Hitler claimed that the election of his National Socialist Party would create employment and prosperity for Germany. Riefenstahl believed these claims..." (p. 11). Barsam speculates that she stayed in Germany out of some combination of opportunism, patriotism and (though she was 31 in 1933) youthful idealism about the possibilities of creating pure art; but he portrays her primarily as an innocent victim. (She was in fact imprisoned by the Allies after the war, and there have been protests on many occasions when she or her films were to appear.)

But the real limitation of Barsam's book is not his unwillingness to buck the cleansing current of writing about Riefenstahl and TRIUMPH OF THE WILL but rather his resting on false assumptions about art and his reluctance to tackle the larger questions the film raises. "The power and the paradox of TRIUMPH OF THE WILL," he ends the *Filmguide* by saying, "is that it can repel us and attract us at the same time" (p. 72). But why can this film, with its repelling ideology, attract us? Barsam doesn't confront this problem head on but implies that the film's technical brilliance captivates us--the clever camera angles, the ingenious editing, the complementary and intensifying musical score. But what about the film's repressed eroticism, or its exaltation of power--don't these also condition our response? In other words, Barsam certainly does discuss TRIUMPH OF THE WILL as a product of history (how could he avoid it?) rather than simply as the independent act of an isolated artist. He writes at times of politics and propaganda; in a final paragraph he even mentions "Dachau, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen, Treblinka, and Belsen" (p. 72). Yet he seems to see that history as isolated, encapsulated in the past, not linked to the present. Thus our main connection to it now is aesthetic: we respond to the cinematic elegance of TRIUMPH OF THE WILL. Similarly, though Barsam devotes several pages to Riefenstahl's other films, he doesn't really ask whether they too are in some way fascistic. Compare this to Sontag (writing, I think, after Barsam), who argues convincingly that Riefenstahl, from her early appearance in Arnold Fanck's "mountain films" to her recent book of photographs celebrating a Sudanese tribe, the Nuba, "has consistently illustrated some of the themes of fascist aesthetics." These aesthetics:

> flow from (and justify) a preoccupation with situations of control, submissive behavior, and extravagant effort, they exalt two seemingly opposite states, egomania and servitude... There is a characteristic pageantry: the massing of groups of people; the turning of people into things...around an all-powerful, hypnotic leader or force....Its choreography alternates between ceaseless motion and a congealed, static, "verile" posing. Fascist art glorifies surrender; it exalts mindlessness; it glamorizes death (p. 26).

Here, at least, we have the beginnings of a theoretical examination of some of the questions raised by TRIUMPH OF THE WILL and a way of relating it to films of other cultures and other times, like Kubrick's CLOCKWORK ORANGE, for example, and various Busby Berkeley films.

Writing earlier, in a 1973 *Film Comment* article,[10] Barsam appeared a bit readier to make some of these connections. OLYMPIA, as well as TRIUMPH OF THE WILL, he says, "insinuate that only the strong and the muscular, the chosen and the elite, can lead and win" (p. 33); and he indicates a continuity between Riefenstahl's Nazi propaganda films and her fiction films when he states that the former "expressed the political manifestation of her vision" (p. 34). (Yet, in the same article, as if recoiling from the implications of this: "TRIUMPH is an aberration which will always weaken her reputation..." p. 34). Perhaps because the format of the *Filmguide* series (guides to revered masterpieces) somehow conditions it, Barsam dwells on these troubling continuities less in his book than in his article and reduces them simply to a "mythic" or "heroic" vision of reality.

Still, Barsam has collected in the *Filmguide* a great deal of information--the complete credits, biographical information, a filmography, an extensive bibliography--and he has clearly studied the film itself. His long and careful scene-by-scene summary/analysis is very perceptive about the film's techniques and contains full translations of the German speeches, important since the American version of the film has incomplete subtitles. But his approach to TRIUMPH OF THE WILL remains primarily formalist and stays within a framework of liberal assumptions about art when he writes, for example (p. 68), that the film "succeeds in fusing politics with art" (as if aesthetics and politics were separable), and when he sees it as an "overwhelming contradiction" that TRIUMPH OF THE WILL can be both "cinematically dazzling and ideologically vicious" (pp. 17-18).

The back cover calls *Filmguide to Triumph of the Will* "the first book in any language on Leni Riefenstahl." Hopefully the second will be more ambitious, more critical, more theoretically probing and less anxious to denazify Riefenstahl and turn her film into a de-politicized object of formalist study.

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[1]The conservative *National Review*, at least back in 1964, had an easier time. With Buckley-esque logic, they argued that Riefenstahl was less of a Nazi than Eisenstein a Communist, and therefore that she needed defending against those who praised him and attacked her. (Arnold Berson and Joseph Keller, "Shame and B Glory in the Movies," January 14, 1964, pp. 17-21.

[2]David Gunston, "Leni Riefenstahl," *Film Quarterly*, Fall 1960, p. 15.

[3]Leif Furhammar and Folke Isaksson, *Politics and Film*, tran. Kersti French (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 110.

[4]Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism," *The New York Review of Books*, February 6, 1975, pp. 23-30.

[5]Hans Barkhausen, "Footnote to the History of Riefenstahl's 'Olympia'," *Film Quarterly*, Fall 1974, pp. 8-12.

[6]Michel Delahaye, "Interview with Leni Riefenstahl," *Cahiers de Cinema in English*, 5 (1966), reprinted in Andrew Sarris, ed., *Interviews with Film Directors* (New York: Avon, 1967), pp. 458, 460.

[7]Amos Vogel, "Can We Now Forget the Evil That She Did?", *The New York Times*, Section 2, May 13, 1973, p. 19.

[8]Delahaye, p. 456.

[9]Ibid., p. 458.

[10]Richard Barsam, "Leni Riefenstahl: Artifice and Truth in a World Apart," *Film Comment*, November/December 1973, pp. 32-37. □

Films and Audiences in China

--Udayan Gupta

Jay Leyda, Dianying (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1972). $16.95

Jay Leyda was in China between 1959 and 1964 and worked on the staff of the new Film Archive of China as an advisor. As an advisor he was also responsible for the evaluation and cataloguing of all previously produced films and films that were produced during the period of his stay. Leyda has spent a considerable amount of his time studying the socialist filmmaking experience--particularly the experience of Russian filmmaking. The result was a very detailed and insightful description of Russian filmmaking--*Kino*. Basically, the same desire for inquiry underlined the work on the Chinese cinema--*Dianying*. In one of his early notes to Hsia Yen, the Vice Minister of Culture and Head of the Film Bureau, Leyda articulates his reason for taking the job...

> One of my aims, while I am in China, is to find out what it is that prevents a Chinese film production from using the full power of film. Is it because the audience is being patronized and protected--and is being given less than it is able to comprehend? Or is it because the influence of the Chinese theater is so strong that the film cannot develop its own methods?

The early sections of *Dianying* chronicle the beginning and the subsequent growth of the film industry in China. Leyda discusses the purpose that films were put to by the different groups in power in China. For the Manchukuo (the Japanese puppet government in Manchuria between 1932 and 1940)

> (films) were intended to show the world (or the Asian world) a stable, self-confident, unworried regime....Few had an openly propagandist point, and often such propagandist points vanished as abruptly as they came into view...

The Japanese made films in China for a much more blatantly propagandist purpose--to show the corrupt nature of the Chinese army and government, and to convince the viewer of the decadent and outworn social system of the Chinese. While the Japanese concentrated on such a role for film, the Communists debated the exact role that film and filmmakers could play in the revolutionary struggle....

> The fundamental task of all revolutionary artists and writers is to expose all dark forces which endanger the people and to extol all the revolutionary struggles of the people.

The end of the war and the subsequent conflict between the Communists and the Kuomintang saw each side using film for the purpose of information and propaganda. With the victory of the Communists, a very consistent policy towards film and filmmaking emerged....

> In the film industry, the basic principle is to eliminate the poisonous imperialist films gradually and strengthen the educational nature of the people's film industry, orientating our films towards the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers....

Many films discarded their previous rigid one-dimensional nature and became much more believable and interesting. Films such as CROWS AND SPARROWS exhibited a casual naturalism that was btoh exciting and innovative--an indication of the positive things ahead.

At the end of the Communist victory in 1949, there began a period of increased interaction between the Soviet Russians and the Communist Chinese. The result was a flood of Soviet films which invariably provided a model for many Chinese filmmakers. Often many Chinese films did not bother to improvise and slavishly imitated their Soviet counterparts.

Beginning in 1952, the Chinese decided to respect the audience's desire for tradition and continuity of traditional themes, and a large number of films began to depict traditional stories and themes with almost a total lack of resemblance to Chinese life. This trend continued until 1956 when the onset of the Hundred Flowers campaign changed much of the content and the treatment of themes. Chinese films began to incorporate sature and this often meant veiled attacks on the Party and its policies. But this freedom was short-lived and by the end of the year there was a strong attack on the errant artists such as Liu Pan (the most satirical filmmaker of this time).

Leyda then documents the controversy brought about by the beginning of a detailed and comprehensive criticism of film...

> ...there was no critical service that could be rendered constructiveby by a film critic: the film had no obligations beyond those pronounced by the Propaganda Office, nor was the critic to recognize standards other than those needed to convey these obligations to the public....

Filmmaking continued and as the Hundred Flowers campaign was reversed and the Great Leap Forward began, films began to attack some of the points described as bad--bureaucracy, sectarianism, and subjectivism, and also the wu ch'i, the five airs--bureaucratic, lifeless, spendthrift, haughty, and squeamish. Hopefully, this would facilitate the progress of the revolution.

It is at this time that Leyda arrived in China, and from here onwards his description becomes much more detailed and comprehensive. He notes that at the same time there is a movement away from fictional feature films, to more films of the documentary and instructional scientific type. Probably one of the most successful efforts in this was THE EIGHT CHARACTER CHARTER ASSURES A GREATER HARVEST....

> It is not only the best Chinese educational film I know, but it is also one of the best modern instructional films made anywhere. Here is one film that was *not* made in a hurry, and worth all the time and care expended on it.

The Sino-Soviet split that came about at the turn of the fifties prompted a break in all artistic collaboration and the Chinese began to disown all previous Soviet influence and criticize all the work that carried it.

From here on, Leyda describes very minutely the direction of the Chinese film industry. There are detailed accounts of the various films made up to the Cultural Revolution, and Leyda notes the movement away from the fictional feature film into purely documentary and instructional films. The Cultural Revolution initiated a great deal of attack on the fictional feature film and in the various "bad" tendencies reflected in them. It was at this point that Party policy restricted the further production of features and emphasized the importance of the documentary and instructional film.

Leyda pins a lot of hope on the future of the Chinese cinema, but his evaluation of its present state is far from encouraging. This is, of course, in direct contradiction to the effusive and highly optimistic note that many European observers of the Chinese cinema strike. Leyda disapproves of the mechanical imitative nature of the Chinese cinema. First, it was the Soviet style and then when the split came, there was a movement towards the style and elements of Hollywood. Fortunately, this is absent from the documentaries and the scientific/instructional films.

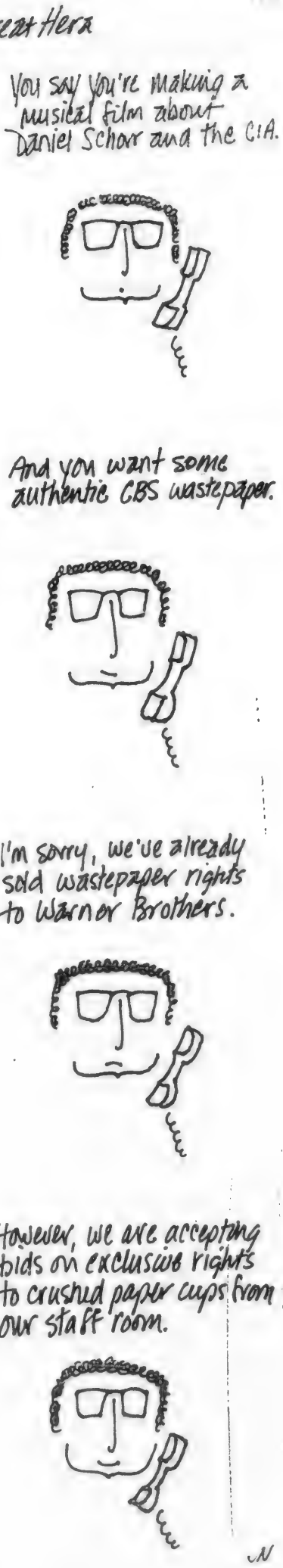
He deplores the great mechanical control that is exercised over scripts and the minimum of latitude that is given to a director in the execution of any given script. The resulting film is often a static and visually unexciting formal product. The problem is further exacerbated by the Chinese cinema's roots in the written word--most of fictional cinema draws extensively from literature, the theater and opera. The final film is probably satisfying in terms of its faithfulness to the original but unexciting as cinema. Leyda complains of the startling lack of realness in the fictional feature....

> (But) (t)he supposedly *real* films were in a deeper rut than the frankly fictional films; the cameramen for both are given the same training, in which all humans and objects must be *arranged* ....something more delicate than privacy was at stake: the *control* of everything seen on the film screen, as part of a total control that was the aim, the desire, the dream of most of the authorities.

Leyda lists the many problems, mostly aesthetic, that affect the fictional film and he finds two of the major ones are the back of any real development of the theme and of the characters. The one-dimensionality that is continually evident is correct ideologically but unconvincing thematically and aesthetically. Yet, despite all these problems, Leyda hopes that the Chinese cinema will be a strong and powerful medium and a significant instrument in the understanding of Chinese society.

Leyda's description and analysis of the Chinese cinema is extremely well researched and comprehensive, but it is also much too traditional in approach. It fails to make some very essential connections between Chinese society and Chinese film. It also fails to explore how the society has influenced directions in filmmaking. Leyda describes production, the problems of production and the films produced in great detail, but he fails to treat them as part of an ideology, as part of a more comprehensive policy towards art in the revolution and in the society. He attributes many of the mechanical and aesthetic problems of the Chinese cinema to the oral and traditional roots of the cinema and stops there. The explanation is too simplistic to be of any real use to us. What we need is a greater exploration of the relationship between control of content and control of form. Leyda ignores this, just as he refuses to explore aesthetic problems in a political context.

Leyda does not discuss the capital intensiveness of cinema and how this characteristic of cinema is dealt with in official policy. In most capitalist filmmaking, the final product is the responsibility of one individual and this role assignation is often divisive and much too individualistic. How is this problem resolved,


Great Hera
You say you're making a musical film about Daniel Schorr and the CIA.
And you want some authentic CBS wastepaper.
I'm sorry, we've already sold wastepaper rights to Warner Brothers.
However, we are accepting bids on exclusive rights to crushed paper cups from our staff room.

cineaste

THE ART AND POLITICS OF THE CINEMA

SPRING 1976 ISSUE

The (Next To) Last Word on Lina Wertmüller (interview and article) / The Costa-Gavras Syndrome / VIVA ZAPATA!, Pro and Con / Fernando Arrabal talks about VIVA LA MUERTE / Carl Marzani discusses Union Films (1940's production group) / Point of Production: Films about Work and Workers / Soviet film-makers interview / Reviews of SWEPT AWAY, MILESTONES, DISTANT THUNDER, FOX AND HIS FRIENDS, WHITE LINE FEVER, EXHIBITION, ALLONSANFAN, Nazi cinema, etc.

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or how is it approached in China? Is there an attempt to seek alternative approaches to filmmaking--to the writing of scripts, to the actual production, and to editing?

Undeniably, Leyda's reactions and responses to Chinese film are shaped by his own politics. But it is the same politics that inhibits a more inter-disciplinary approach to film. Leyda does find problems with Chinese cinema but his elucidation of them tend to be extremely subjective. There is no attempt to look at the cinema from the point of view of the audience and in terms of the success or failure of the communication effort. Is the cinema a viable political medium to the Chinese, or does it have to be continually corrected in an effort to keep it in the correct ideological direction? What is the Chinese cinema's role in a comprehensive manner; how does it complement the other media in a political manner? Leyda does not address himself to any of these questions, and thus leaves some of the major questions about the Chinese cinema unsatisfied.

It is now generally accepted that the phenomenon of film is a complex one, and that one of the factors that contributes to this complexity is its capital-intensiveness. It is not that filmmaking or the showing of film is expensive, it is also that the supportive infra-structure requires intensive capital investments. Can this cost be justified in a socialist economy, or are there more profitable alternative investments? Is there any discussion of this sort in China?

A lot more information about the nature of filmmaking in a socialist country is required, information about the dialectic of form and content. In other socialist countries there has been the continuous conflict between control and aesthetics. When control has been relaxed there has also been a relaxation of ideology--a tendency towards an apolitical humanism. Is the relaxation of ideology and aims a necessary result of relaxed control, or is this a problem peculiar to East European socialism? Has there been a problem of this kind in Communist China, and how has this been dealt with?

Dianying is an informative book and is perhaps the first book of its kind that deals with filmmaking in Communist China, but it fails to resolve many unanswered questions about film and about socialist filmmaking. There has to be a determined effort to relate the Communist Chinese experience to the experience of other socialist countries and to explain many of the peculiarities that have arisen. One hopes that future studies of Chinese filmmaking will attempt this. □

REPORT REPORT REPORT

ROCKEFELLER INTERESTS ATTACK METHADONE FILM

--Peter Biskind

Methadone maintenance is a wide open poker game where drug-abuse bureaucrats, medical researchers, and hustlers-on-the-make play with the lives of heroin addicts for million dollar stakes. Julia Reichert and Jim Klein have thrown their recent film, METHADONE: AN AMERICAN WAY OF DEALING (see article and interview in JUMP CUT 5) into the pot and are reaping the consequences. A modest, low-budget black and white documentary shot two years ago in Dayton, Ohio, it has aroused a storm of controversy reminiscent of the outcry raised by Fred Wiseman's TITICUT FOLLIES several years ago. "I've shown a lot of films that supposedly were controversial," says Bill Sloan who runs the "What's Happening" series at the Donnell Library in New York City. "They've expressed all kinds of points of view on everything under the sun, but this one is easily the most controversial documentary I've ever shown."

Reichert and Klein's film, a powerful and devastating indictment of methadone maintenance, has become the target of a well-organized censorship campaign apparently orchestrated by Rockefeller University, where methadone was first developed in the early sixties.

Methadone is a powerful synthetic narcotic which is supposed to "block" the craving for heroin, while allowing users to hold down jobs and lead normal lives. Drs. Vincent Dole and Marie Nyswander, who pioneered methdone development at Rockefeller University Hospital, regard heroin addiction as a physical disease, characterized by an actual chemical demand for the drug. Methadone, which satisifes this demand, must therefore be taken indefinitely, in much the same way that insulin is given to diabetics. Hence the term "maintenance."

The film zeroes in on a methadone clinic in Dayton, Ohio. It shows methadone patients nodding out at a counseling session, dealing methadone diverted from the clinic or purchased under the table from clinic personnel, suffering from methadone's side effects like dramatic weight gain, impotence, insomnia. Employing a mixture of cinema verite techniques and interviews, the film draws a dispiriting picture of people trapped in a bleak routine of regulated addiction masquerading as treatment.

Methadone bureaucrats angrily disoute the film's jaundiced view of maintenance programs. According to Susan Davidoff, director of a Camden, New Jersey, clinic, Reichert and Klein unfairly seize on a poorly run clinic in Dayton, and use it to discredit all methadone programs. She feels the film portrays addicts in an unflattering light, "further promoting the stigma attached to drug addiction."

Moreover, the film's critics accuse Reichert and Klein of taking money from RAP, Inc., a drug-free therapeutic community which the film compares favorably to the methadone program in Dayton. They also claim the film misrepresents the credentials of methadone critic Dr. William Dobbs. Dobbs, they say, is a PhD, not an MD, and therefore less qualified to evaluate methadone maintenance. Both these charges are untrue. The filmmakers did not receive money from RAP, and Dobbs received his MD in 1952 from Emory University.

Not satisfied with bad-mouthing the film, pro-methadone groups have launched a vigorous and unprecedented campaign to discourage exhibitors from showing it. They have also threatened Reichert and Klein with a fist full of law suits. When the film was premiered at the Museum of Modern Art in the fall of 1974, Bill Sloan, who arranged the screening, was deluged with letters and calls urging him to cancel the screening. Several calls came from people who identified themselves with Rockefeller University. They persuaded Sloan not to purchase a print for the New York Public Library, although Sloan later changed his mind. The screening itself was packed by pro-methadone forces who engaged in an acrimonious screaming match with supporters of the film.

In April 1975, when the film was announced as part of the Whitney Museum's program of independent films, the film department and museum administration began to receive calls requesting that the film be withdrawn. Many of the calls came from a group calling itself the Committee of Concerned Methadone Patients (CCMP). According to John Handhardt, film curator of the Whitney, they threatened to bring pressure through Mrs. Laurence Rockefeller, a trustee of the museum. The film was shown as scheduled, but CCMP pickets entered the museum and succeeded in leafletting members of the audience until they were stopped by security guards. Although Handhardt asserts that "only material published by the museum is distributed in the museum--program notes and the like," the pickets somehow obtained permission to leave their leaflets on the table with the museum's notes, where they were available to patrons throughout the remainder of the film's run.

Several months later, the film was shown at Third World Newsreel's Higher Ground Cinema. Members of CCMP contacted Higher Ground, identified themselves as representatives of Rockefeller University, and demanded that the film be cancelled. When Higher Ground refused, CCMP announced its intention to sue the Whiteny, and threatened to make Higher Ground a co-defendant if it went ahead with the screening.

In addition to pressuring exhibitors, opponents of the film are contemplating two sets of law suits. Ed Brown and Fred Stroud, two former patients at the Dayton clinic who are featured in the film, plan to sue the filmmakers for invading their privacy and damaging their reputations. The Dayton Bureau of Drug Abuse (BUDA), which runs the clinic, claims the filmmakers violated an agreement that gave Dayton BUDA editorial rights over the film. It is also thinking of suing. The Methadone Information Center in New York claims the filmmakers, who are distributing the film under the same name, have irreparably damaged its reputation. It has also threatened legal action, but now seems to have changed its mind.

Reichert and Klein deny all these charges. They accuse Rockefeller University of manipulating the legitimate grievances of methadone patients for their own ends. "Some people have been helped by methadone, and addicts are discriminated against," says Reichert. "But I suspect that Rockefeller University, whose money and prestige are heavily committed to methadone, is using the Committee of Concerned Methadone Patients as a front to do its dirty work." And indeed, many of the groups most active in the fight against the film lead like a trail of crumbs back to Rockefeller University.

The Committee of Concerned Methadone Patients, a patient-run organization, emphasizes its independence. "We're tired of other people running our lives," says a spokesperson. But many of its most active members are closely tied to the methadone bureaucracy, and to Rockefeller University in particular, whose interests coincide with their own. John Orocca, head of CCMP, has been associated with Dr. Vincent Dole for 12 years, both as a patient and as a collaborator. They have co-authored a paper on methadone.

It turns out that the Methadone Information Center is also a Rockefeller spin-off. The name was first owned by Rockefeller University, and then by something called the Community Treatment Foundatin, itself (guess what!) a Rockefeller baby. Although a spokesperson for the Community Treatment Foundation first denied that it was in any way connected with Rockefeller University, its executive vice-president, Maurice Bachrach, later admitted that it is in fact intimately tied to Rockefeller. Its president is Dr. Vincent Dole. Its secretary, Sydney A. Woodd-Cahusac, is treasurer of Rockefeller University. Its research director, Herman Joseph, is listed in the Rockefeller University catalogue as an investigator with the Biology of Addictive Diseases laboratory group, headed by Dr. Dole. Joseph, a former parole officer, has played a decisive role in mobilizing opposition to the film. Several methadone patients who are active in CCMP are employed by the Community Treatment Foundation on the research project headed by Joseph. The cozy relationship between the methadone team at Rockefeller and its various incarnations (CCMP, Community Treatment Foundation, Methadone Information Service), extends to the federal government, which funds Joseph's research project. This project employs personnel who have a high stake in methadone maintenance (patients and researchers) to evaluate the effectiveness of methadone programs through follow-up studies. A rather flagrant conflict of interests.

The sequence of events leading up to the attempts to suppress the film suggests that Rockefeller front groups, unable to block the film directly, encouraged the patients in the film to sue Reichert and Klein. According to Ed Lampton, the director of the Dayton clinic where the film was shot, Joseph called in mid-April, just before the Whitney screening, demanding that Lampton "do something" in Dayton to stop the film. "He was adamant," recalls Lampton. "He wanted action." Lampton, who to this day has not seen the film, then started moving on two fronts. He urged Mel Zwissler, chief of the Ohio Bureau of Drug Abuse, to write the Whitney requesting that the film be withdrawn. He also put Ed Brown and Fred Stroud, who at that time were favorably disposed towards the film, in touch with Joseph. (Stroud had even volunteered to help Reichert and Klein distribute the film.) "It may have been after I talked to Joseph that the clients (Brown and Stroud) first complained about the film," conceded Lampton.

The suspicion that Brown and Stroud were prodded by methadone administrators is confirmed by Susan Davidoff, director of the Camden clinic, who called Lampton in June 1975, after seeing the film at Rutgers. "I asked Lampton what he was doing about the film," recalls Davidoff. "Ed said they were trying to get the patients together for a class action suit, but the whole thing just seemed to fall apart. It was at this point, when I was able to say we had the state of New Jersey behind this, and I was able to talk with Ed Brown and Fred Stroud, that these two patients in particular really got moving."

Davidoff also got in touch with Bernard Bihari, Assistant Commissioner of Addiction Programs in New York State, Richard Russo, Assistant Commissioner of Alcohol, Narcotic, and Drug Abuse Control in New Jersey, and coordinated a tri-state effort to have the film negatively reviewed by the influential National Coordinating Council on Drug Education in Washington, DC. The Council obliged by panning the film in its national newsletter as "biased" and "propagandistic."

Most of the film's critics are anxious to disavow any intention to censor the film, although some do so with evident regret. "Under some amendment--the first amendment or whatever it is," acknowledged Davidoff reluctantly, "you're not allowed to suppress a film." But they have clearly overstepped the line. "When one group in the community tries to pressure you into not showing a film," says Sloan, "it becomes a censorship issue."

Herman Joseph, who once called the film "vicious" and "slanderous," has suddenly become shy about voicing his opinions. Maurice Bachrach, Joseph's boss at the Community Treatment Foundation, is reluctant to talk and visibly

nervous about the whole subject. He suggests that the patients will be allowed to carry the ball from now on. "Although Joseph has been vocal about the film, he is not now taking a stance," says Bachrach. "I think the Community Treatment Foundation should stay out of the fight. The patients have picked it up, and the patients are a much more vivid and appropriate source of protest than we are." Doubtless. The Community Treatment Foundation is lowering its profile, at least partly, according to Bachrach, because it fears losing its tax-exempt status.

Why Rockefeller University and its minions have exercised themselves over METHADONE: AN AMERICAN WAY OF DEALING, is not entirely clear. The violence of the response suggests that there may be something more at stake than meets the eye. The film seems to have struck a nerve. Methadone maintenance was initially embraced by the Nixon administration as a cheap and easy way to cut crime in the streets. It didn't work out that way, but in the meantime federal money created a bloated methadone bureaucracy and a small army of methadone profiteers. As far as Rockefeller is concerned, methadone maintenance may be the domestic version of its international population studies; that is, the cornerstone of an elaborate program of ghetto pacification and social control. As far as the bureaucrats are concerned, the answer is a whole lot simpler. There's an awful lot of money riding on methadone maintenance. According to Susan Davidoff, the film "creates a wall of hostility against methadone, and will make the funding of methadone programs much more difficult." After the screening at the Museum of Modern Art, Bill Sloan was approached by a doctor involved in methadone research. "This film is going to destroy us," the doctor told him, "because it's hitting us in our pocketbooks, and we're going to fight it." □

The Signifier That Failed to Make Milwaukee Famous

--Chuck Kleinhans

There are, I take it, only a few good reasons for attending an academic conference, and the best of those are material: business or pleasure. Mostly I went to the grandly-named International Symposium on Film Theory and Practical Criticism at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, November 19-22 last year, to see friends, sell *JUMP CUT*, and talk to prospective writers. From that perspective, the conference was good: not enough time for everyone I wanted to see, but good sales. Of course there is an ostensible reason for having and attending conferences, which is that you might learn something. However, conferences are usually impossible along those lines. So it's much better to attend them with no expectations; then at least you won't be disappointed most of the time.

Prior to the event, the Milwaukee conference promised a certain excitement. Clearly excluded from panels and presentations were the journalistic reviewers, auteurists, and scholarly historians who dominate most university film conferences. (Excluded as much as possible, given the academic Old Boy network.) In their place were a batch of Bright Young People: from France, semiologists Raymond Bellour and Thierry Kuntzel; from England, Stephen Heath, Geoffrey Nowell Smith, and Peter Wollen; and from the US, Marxist critic Fredric Jameson, avant-garde filmmakers Yvonne Rainer and Tony Conrad, critics Alan Williams and Brian Henderson, and a group of socialist feminists conversant in European film theory and American political reality: Fina Bathrick, Julia Lesage, Judith Mayne and Maureen Turim.

The opening presentation by Stephen Heath, as announced by Michel Benamou, conference director and head of 20th Century Studies at UW-M, over a PA system that was still playing muzak, was to sum up the recent advanced work being done in the area of film and ideology and point some directions that would then be followed up in workshops. (The other broad areas were semiotics, history, visual arts (avant-garde), and narration. Workshops overlapped, so you had to pick and choose.) Heath then did just what had been asked of him: he summarized beautifully the most recent work being done in film and ideology and indicated some problems and directions. The only problem was that the presentation presupposed familiarity with the past few years of *Screen*. Thus, perhaps two or three dozen people in a room of 300 had any idea of what Heath was talking about. Clearly the fault was not Heath's--he gave the presentation he was asked to give. But the incident gave an initial division, placing on one side the theorists or semiologists, who spoke in spiralling abstractions or who used a bewildering microscopic analysis, in either case with a dense jargon and in neither case with much finesse at holding onto a theoretical point and a concrete example at the same time.

The opposition was an assemblage of Tarnished Middle Aged People: film historian Gerald Mast, "academic impressario" (as the corridor joke had it) Gerald O'Grady, English teacher Robert Scholes (who used to say Hollywood film was certainly not art and certainly not worth thinking about), and Annette Michaelson. Michaelson had the best aspects of the Middle Aged position: clarity and conciseness of discourse, copious examples, and a readily understandable point. These are distinct virtues. And, of course, they don't compensate for the main point of her paper--that Eisenstein existed so we could have Brakhage--being totally silly, if not perversely stupid.

So the conference was divided. And there we are, right in the middle of topic Number One in Film Studies today: the Semiologists vs. the Humanists. The handy terms come from James Monaco, who wrote an interesting analysis of last summer's CUNY "Film and the University" conference in *Take One* (4:12)--a conference that seems to have been the first of a series of polarized academic meetings. In print the split has been evidenced last year in *Film Comment* by several articles by Robin Wood attacking *Screen* for its semiology and its marxism. Yet the two camps are not unified internally, and recognizing this, Monaco argues that the real division that is shaping up is a deeper one between the "amateurs," who have dominated film study and criticism to present, and the "professionals," be they semiologists or humanists or whatever, who want to mold it into an academic discipline with departmental status, scholarly journals and meetings and other trappings of respectability.

The situation has produced unusual convergences. For example, Michaelson's idealist formalism has little in common with Wood's debased auteurism except in common hostility to left politics, but Michaelson's orientation has many shared assumptions with the formalist tendencies of some semiologists. So are, it seems battle positions have been chosen on the basis of shared hatred of enemies rather than mutual attraction of allies. But, as tenuous as these connections and oppositions are, at Milwaukee they seemed very real. At their worst, the Tarnished Middle Aged forces dismissed semiology with a philistine anti-intellectualism (a favorite trick of intellectuals) while fronting a basically reactionary aesthetics and politics. At their worst, the Bright Young People presented theory with a very tangential use value in an obscure way, although they often had a progressive aesthetics and politics.

Such *seemed* to be the division at Milwaukee, which left most of the people there a choice between clearly presented reaction and ponderous innovation. So they did what could be expected of any self-respecting person: they voted with their feet and left. Benamou said 500 or so people signed up for the conference, but it was clear at the end that perhaps 75 were attending. (I *am* biting the hand that fed me: Benamou waived my registration fee--"Take lots of notes! Write it up in *JUMP CUT*!"--and I got free meal tickets for three lunches from the conference.) And I imagine that many of the people who stuck it out to the end were holding to the petty bourgeois ethic of "if you spend the money, you should sit through it to get your money's worth," even if they were bored.

By and large, the conference dismissed most of the people who attended it. The basic organizing principle seemed to be "scam all the grant money you can" which meant the whole thing was a big show for the deans at UW-M and the bureaucrats who hand out National Endowment money. If the topics at hand were to be genuinely considered you had two choices: either a rather small event composed of people actually doing advanced work who could then exchange information among peers (say the few dozen people in film semiology), or you could have a conference that would present this new information to the bulk of people attending--film teachers and film students--in a basic and useful way. But neither of these types of events loosens the purse strings, being too pragmatic.

As a result, genuine contradictions within the Bright Young People camp were not apparent for most people attending, and it was only with the most subtle analysis that one could see acute differences. Thus what one person reported to me was a very sharp argumentative exchange with Bellour and Kuntzel criticizing Henderson, others told me was an agreeable clearing up of a minor point. Thus what Heath later told me was a clear political demarcation of positions with Heath and Wollen on one side and Jameson and Mayne on the other, several others interpreted as a bizarre and muddy argument that seemed to mask, in an elitist way, personal rather than political differences. Thus in Nowell Smith's workshop, he argued the need for a marxist-structuralist history of cinema styles, but in such a low-keyed way that no one quite caught on that he was attacking current teaching and research. The discussion never jelled into clear political oppositions.

What was clearer to me afterwards was that the most important difference at the conference--and one that remained submerged during it--was a deep right-left political split. It is increasingly apparent that there is a reactionary and formalist wing in the semiology camp, as well as a progressive and marxist side. However, at the conference this was muted, partly by the conference's very organization, which wanted to set up the opposition in nonpolitical terms as young vs. middle aged, semiologists vs. humanists, professionals vs. amateurs. These opposed terms have some usefulness as a shorthand notation, but only of a surface phenomenon. To confine discussion of what's happening in film studies to humanists vs. semiologists is to leave out politics. On that plane we have had endless argument, but no progress. It is clearer and clearer that "humanists" can be elitist reactionaries as well as populist liberals and that "semiologists" can be idealists or materialists. It is also clear that many people want to carry on with the professionalization of film studies, or with the continued "amateur" tone, without considering political issues of class, sex, and race. Thus under the apparent controversy we find a genuine one, a political one, that many pretend doesn't exist. Even some apparent marxists don't want to phrase it in political terms that would involve taking sides. Benamou, the conference director, is a member of the marxist caucus of one professional association, yet he designed a conference that subtracted politics.

For progressive people in film studies to effectively fight the class, race, and sex bias that others are busily ignoring, those people must abandon their elitism. The main means by which left elitism was expressed in Milwaukee was in the concentration on isolated and inaccessible theory. The problem is not theory *per se* but dealing with theory in elitist ways that separate the left from the majority of people who attend conferences. To accept the established structures and fail to deal with the rank and file at conferences (or in writing and teaching) is to leave people without an effective left opposition to the academic entrepreneurs, formalists, sexists and other reactionaries present.

A few workshops at the conference, notably those by the socialist feminists, were able to raise political points in a clear way and match the conference's announced combination of "film theory and practical criticism," largely, I believe, because feminist critics are more clearly part of an active, ongoing movement than many male radicals, and thereby closer to political reality.

Obviously, with everyone arriving and meeting at conferences within a few short hours, creating an effective radical presence is difficult. And also obviously, what is especially needed in the near future is a major conference on radical film theory and practice. Since that's not likely to be sponsored by a university and funded out of National Endowment monies, we'll have to do it ourselves. In the meantime, at conferences (as well as in publications, and in teaching), it is imperative that progressive people be open, direct, and clear about their politics. Only in that way can they present an effective alternative and turn such events to a positive end. □

LONDON LETTER

Feminist and Left Independent Filmmaking in England

LONDON WOMEN'S FILM GROUP
38 Earlham Street
London WC2

Dear JUMP CUT:

I enclose a copy of the paper we wrote for the Independent Filmmakers Conference 22/23 May and our evening at the Institute of Contemporary Arts where we will be presenting some of our films for discussion as one of a current series of meetings of political filmmakers.

The IFA conference brought together about 150 independent filmmakers from around the country for the first time to discuss such topics as women and filmmaking, distribution, funding, regional film development, the British future, and film criticism. It was a useful weekend though rather weighted towards passive listening to papers. Many papers were written for the conference, and there will be a further conference to finalize policy. A major concern at the moment is money, particularly as the major funding body, the British Film Institute, has had its funds cut. A comparison of state priorities shows that the Arts Council gets a total grant of 37 million pounds ($67.3 million); of this 230,000 pounds ($418,600) is available for films about art. The BFI gets 25 million pounds ($4.6 million). A total figure for filmmaking is 125,000 pounds ($227,500), cut at the moment to 72,000 pounds ($131,000). This year 230 people applied for grants. Five were accepted, plus two completion grants.

This year for the first time the London Women's Film Group has received a full grant (which includes some wages) for a project based on a fairy tale which will deal with women's sexuality and attitudes towards it. Some of us are currently completing ABOUT TIME, a film for the Wages for Housework Campaign, and also getting WHOSE CHOICE? about abortion shown and publicized.

The Newsreel Collective had not had its grant renewed and is finishing its sixth film, about unemployment, and discussing new possibilities for films. (Previous films, made between June '75 and February '76, are about the abortion campaign, the Republican newspapers in Portugal, a long film about the situation in Portugal--there is a copy in the U.S. held by Apoie--and one about housing struggles.)

The Berwick Street Film Collective are editing Part Two of THE NIGHTCLEANERS film, whilst Part One is slowly being shown and receiving a great deal of critical attention. It is an interesting and influential film, loved or hated.

Members of Cinema Action were arrested, whilst filming in a British Leyland car plant at the request of the workers who wanted the true nature of their work-in to be made public. The crew were not charged, but a "trial by media" was begun with headlines like: "a left-wing extremist...smuggled a communist film crew into Triumph's Canley Plant," and "'Red Film' Row at Leyland," and "...smuggling film crew to spy on an industrial dispute." A shop steward was picked out by management for victimization to repress the workers' initiative and charged with gross industrial misconduct and conspiracy. So now filmmakers are beginning a struggle for the right of workers to have their own means of self-representation.

The IFA conference began the process of getting the existence and value of independent filmmakers acknowledged by the main film union, ACTT. It also brought more close together filmmakers and film critics with a session with Claire Johnston and Peter Wollen.

Whilst "independent" filmmakers struggle to survive, a new Government Working Party proposes to solve the crisis in the British film industry by giving an extra 20 million pounds ($36.4 million) to the very men who have presided over its decline!

The other news is the ACTT union's annual conference. The policy against South Africa was toughened, abortion on demand was supported, the policy on nationalization of the film industry is to be re-examined, and the conference erupted during a debate about political freedoms when a speaker said the only way to prevent the bombings was to withdraw the troops from Ireland.

THE LONDON WOMEN'S FILM GROUP, SELF-HISTORY:

The London Women's Film Group was formed in January 1972 for two basic reasons: to disseminate women's liberation ideas, and for women to learn the skills denied them in the industry. One of the basic precepts of the Women's Liberation Movement was and is that women need to organize separately to develop their own politics. Making films is a highly technical process; in a patriarchal society women lack confidence in technical areas, quite apart from the bias in both formal and informal education and actual discrimination in the industry. We wanted to break down the unnecessary mystification that surrounds technical skills, and to do this we particularly wanted to learn technical skills from other women in a supportive situation.

We aimed to work collectively. Those of us who had worked in the industry were particularly frustrated by the existing division of labor and women's place in the hierarchy at the bottom, in secretarial grades, negative cutting, continuity jobs, etc. So our intention was that everybody in the group become familiar with all the stages in the process of making a film, both at the level of technology and the level of ideas.

The first three months were spent learning to work cameras and tape-recorders. We were working in small groups and produced two short films: SERVE AND OBEY and BETTSHANGER '72 (which we believe was the first sync sound film made entirely by women in this country). The group acquired other films made by women in the group before its formation: WOMEN AGAINST THE BILL, MISS/MRS, and later FAKENHAM OCCUPATION, WOMEN OF THE RHONDDA and PUT YOURSELF IN MY PLACE.

These films (with the exception of PUT YOURSELF IN MY PLACE, which was the most recent of these and is a role-reversal comedy) fell loosely into already established black and white documentary traditions. At a time when women's liberation was challenging events like the Miss World Contest and the way in which commercial advertising exploits women, we tended to reject commercial films wholesale as the ideological products of a capitalist, sexist, racist society. We were dissatisfied with the roles offered women in films--sex object, virgin, whore, mother, wife, doormat--as non-assertive, ultimately unhappy creatures. We wanted to counter this by showing women's lives "as they really are." We felt that women, and particularly working class women, hadn't previously had the chance to express themselves on film. Television documentary manipulated them. We thought we could avoid this manipulation by establishing relationships with the women we were filming and therefore make more "honest" films because we were working outside the industry, with all its constraints. Because we were women filming women we were in a unique position to identify with them and for them to talk more openly with us, for film.

Originally our aim was to change the context in which a film is seen. We wanted to break down not only the division between filmmaking and distribution but also to break down audience passivity by *always* going out with the films and discussing them when they were shown. We wanted to extend the audience for political films beyond the usual alternative outlets such as colleges and film societies. We wanted women in factories, trade unions, local communities, tenants associations and housing estates to see our films. But because of lack of resources in terms of time, money and energy (we were doing waged jobs as well as filming) and the difficulty of combining distribution with the demands of producing films, we were able to do this only to a limited extent. So we now distribute our films primarily through The Other Cinema with the limitations that involves. We also retain our own print of our films to show to people who can't afford the hire charge and go out with them to initiate discussion whenever possible. We have a unique distribution possibility in the women's movement, where there is a tremendous demand for women's films.

In August 1972, a women's event was organized in conjunction with the Edinburgh Film Festival, bringing together for the first time in this country a collection of films made by women. (It was there that we filmed a program for BBC2. A BBC editor cut it with our supervision, it was shown on Film Night, and we earned 70 pounds). In April and May 1973, Claire Johnston organized a season of Women's Cinema at the National Film Theatre. Both these events included films by Maya Daren, Germaine Dulac, Ida Lupino, Dorothy Arzner, Stephanie Rothman and Nelly Kaplan as well as many films made by independent contemporary women filmmakers, many of them having their roots in the Women's Movement. It was an exciting, inspiring time.

The season gave rise to many questions: "Is a film made by a woman necessarily feminist?" "Can a film made within the dominant mode of production, e.g. capitalist Hollywood, do anything other than reflect the values of the society it is made for and comes out of?" "Is documentary necessarily more useful than fiction, to the Women's Movement?" etc. Looking at films made in Hollywood, we began to challenge the tendency common in the left--and among ourselves at that time--to dismiss Hollywood as a monolithic dream factory, not worth serious examination. The films, especially those by Arzner, showed how women directors working in Hollywood could, while using the stereotypes and icons of Hollywood itself, subvert the myths surrounding women and to some extent break with the dominant patriarchal discourse. At the very least, as in Ida Lupino's films and in Arzner's DANCE, GIRL,

Filming THE AMAZING EQUAL PAY SHOW

DANCE, a woman's point of view, usually absent from Hollywood films (we are not including "weepies" made by men) and set within a conventional Hollywood structure, could be disturbing.

The French filmmaker, Nelly Kaplan, discussed her films, LA FIANCEE DU PIRATE (DIRTY MARY) and PAPA LES PETITS BATEAUX at the National Film Theatre. She emphasized the importance of fantasy in creating new images of women. Although the image of a strong woman on the screen might not correspond with reality in patriarchal society, it could help give women strength and confidence by widening their possibilities. Kaplan's heroines aren't punished. The prostitute isn't made to repent and the witch isn't burnt; on the contrary, she struggles and wins. To accusations of making men "ugly" in her films, Kaplan responded, "Of course, my films are a little misandronous. We live under patriarchal oppression. We have to fight the enemy." (from an interview with Barbara Halpern Martineau, New York City, June 20th, 1972).

We decided to make THE AMAZING EQUAL PAY SHOW. This decision was based on our worries about the documentary mode of filmmaking and a concern, inspired by the Women's Cinema Events, to make a political film which was entertaining. WOMEN OF THE RHONDDA and BETTSHANGER '72 worked within a realist naturalistic tradition; the material was intended to speak for itself. Both films asked the audience to make their own deductions, and we hoped or assumed their deductions would be the same as ours. But we learned that audiences weren't necessarily in accord with our views unless they were already previously committed to feminism. THE AMAZING EQUAL PAY SHOW was more overt in its approach. It attempted to be more didactic and to provide an analysis of sexism within capitalist society.

The script was written and performed by the Women's Theatre Group in response to a request from the trade union, TASS. The play itself was also performed at the Acton Women's Liberation Conference in September 1972. We were very enthusiastic about the play and sympathetic to its political analysis. Throughout the making of the film we collaborated closely with the Theatre Group, who acted in the film as well as the play.

THE AMAZING EQUAL PAY SHOW was made over a period of two years, mainly at weekends and in the evenings. (We have always been short of money, and members of the group have always had to work at waged jobs to maintain themselves.) Directorial and script decisions were made collectively at meetings between the Film Group and the Theatre Group. Technical jobs were rotated, giving everyone an opportunity to operate the camera and sound equipment and to learn about production and editing. We did away with the job of Director. Instead, one of us acted as co-ordinator, ensuring that the collective decisions made at planning meetings were carried out. For many of the women it was the first time they had operated the equpment, so much of the training was on the job or immediately prior to it.

Our limited financial resources forced us to be highly economical. The film was made on a grant of 200 pounds from Camden Council, short ends of film, borrowed equipment, and BBC facilities courtesy of the Open Door program. Most of the film was shot on a ratio of 3:1.

We showed excerpts of THE AMAZING EQUAL PAY SHOW on BBC2's Open Door, an access program, relating the film's portrayal of women in male-dominated trade unions to our own situations in our union ACTT (The Association of Cinematographic and Television Technicians). We were very wary of this TV situation, but tried to get the best out of it.

We decided to start organizing within our Union, the Association of Cinematographers, Television and Allied Technicians. Several of us already in the union began raising the issue of discrimination against women in the film industry. Women have always been ghettoized in secretarial jobs in TV and low-grade jobs in the labs. The excuse used in the camera department is that cameras are too heavy for women. The excuse used in the labs is that it would be impossible for women to work in the dark alongside men.

> In film and TV production, out of over 150 grades covered by ACTT agreements, 60% of the women are concentrated into just three of those grades (Patterns of Discrimination Against Women in the Film and Television Industries).

> In half of the existing ACTT grades there is not a single woman (Patterns of Discrimination).

In November 1972, the Union formed a so-called Anti-Discrimination Committee, later called the Committee on Equality. A women's caucus, independently of the Union Committee, managed to put forward three motions from three different shops at the Annual Conference of 1973, which was unprecedented. Women represented about 5% of the 500 delegates. One of these motions demanded that the Union appoint and pay a researcher to write a report on the situation of women in the film industry. The resolution was passed, but we heard the Union might appoint a male researcher. After we picketed the Union offices, Sarah Benton was appointed, and in 1975 she produced a report, "Patterns of Discrimination Against Women in the Film and Television Industries." It and its recommendations were passed by the Conference. This was the first project of its kind ever undertaken by a union. Consequently, the report has had some discussion in shops up and down the country.

Women have continued to make their presence felt at the Union's Annual Conference with motions and amendments on pensions, maternity and paternity leave, abortion, etc. Attitudes are slow to change, but a few women are now getting jobs in the technical grades. Under the new sex discrimination laws, the first cases are being brought to the Committee on Equality--for example the case of a woman recently refused a trainee camera job by Granada. Production secretaries are organizing for better job definition and regrading.

Throughout this campaign it has been our aim for women across the board to have better job opportunities, job re-training programs, paid maternity leave and child-care facilities at their place of work, i.e., not just to get a few women top jobs. The need for this was demonstrated when with the sponsorship of the ACTT we held a one-day Workshop for women in the industry to learn something of how to handle technical equipment and to ask basic questions. All the teachers were voluntary and all were women, except the National Film School dubbing mixer who also volunteered his time. A hundred women turned up, and they expressed the wish for further workshops.

We have several ongoing filmmaking projects right now. In Autumn 1974 we received a small BFI grant to make a film on abortion, which we began to research and write upon completion of THE AMAZING EQUAL PAY SHOW in January 1975. Our intent was to make an information film which brings out the contradictory attitudes that exist about the subjects of contraception and abortion, and which attempts to make clear the connection between ideology and women's everyday lives. The film, called WHOSE CHOICE?, puts forward the argument for a woman's right to choose around the narrative of a young woman's decision to have an abortion and her attempts to get one. It is 40 minutes, color, available from The Other Cinema, 12/13 Little Newport Street, London WC2.

The films in distribution by the London Women's Film Group to date are these: MISS/MRS, SERVE AND OBEY, BETTSHANGER '72, FAKENHAM OCCUPATION, WOMEN OF THE RHONDDA, WOMEN AGAINST THE BILL, PUT YOURSELF IN MY PLACE, THE AMAZING EQUAL PAY SHOW, CARELESS LOVE, WHOSE CHOICE?, and ABOUT TIME.

Two other groups of interest making political films are the Berwick Street Film Collective and Liberation Films. The Berwick Street Collective makes films mainly on political issues. THE NIGHT CLEANERS (70 min.) is an important film documenting the struggle of office cleaners to organize and press for better working conditions and pay. It uses editing techniques which are quite different from what is usual in cinema verite work, in an attempt to extend the language of film and to produce a positive contribution to the political debate on the issues being fought for. It had a considerable effect at the time and a second follow-up film is currently being made which takes still further some of the techniques used in the first film.

Liberation Films works with video and film with community groups mainly in London. It undertakes projects to encourage public participation in local affairs with the long term aim of catalyzing political and community action. It also arranges screenings and distributes its own films, and films made by other groups, including American Newsreel. ALL YOU NEED IS AN EXCUSE (12 mins.) and FLY A FLAG FOR POPLAR (70 mins.) are two of its films. The first film documents the fight by a group in Kilburn to take over derelict railway land as playspace, and the second is a social documentary of the people of Poplar. Both were made with the participation of local groups.

I've just remembered another thing. Britain is now in the interesting position of having four films on abortion. One by London Women's Film Group, one by Newsreel (made to be complementary; one ready in July '75, LWFG's February '76), one by a women's film group in Sheffield, and one by a mixed (mostly male) group from the National Film School of a women's theatre presentation. I feel having four films is really good and I wish the left could make several films on every important topic, partly because the pressure on a film when it will be the only one is for it to be all things to all people, encompassing every point perfectly and made quickly to fill the need--terrifying! Having four films leads to fruitful discussion about filmmaking and meaning. I hope no one relates to them competitively.

--Linda Dove

An AFI Salute to the AFI

--Loretta Lotman

Television is a manipulative medium. It lends strength and importance to anything that is on it, regardless of individual merit. It is also a slick, multi-million dollar business controlled by pros who know how to package image, information and style. Producers know that television is the most subliminal of the mass media; what you see on the air is carefully honed for maximum impact. Unfortunately, the subliminal messages often equate to something the average viewer can't perceive.

A recent example of viewer manipulation was "The American Film Institute Salute to William Wyler," a star-studded extravaganza produced by the AFI and sold to CBS. It was impressive. We saw a great testimonial dinner. We saw glittery stars assemble to have their loving say about Wyler. We saw film clips. We saw the aging director smile and smile and smile.

What you didn't see, unless you looked, was an extended commercial for the AFI, MGM films, and a general image-shaping for the film industry itself. With rare exceptions, the speeches were written by staff writers for the production company. Words from such diverse personalities as Eddy Albert, Walter Pidgeon and Audrey Hepburn had the same ring. And almost everyone included in their comments a carefully worded "Thank you to the American Film Institute for this marvelous tribute." They sounded like the same mimeo machine had run off the sentences.

While it's standard procedure for stars to be interviewed for their anecdotes and have the writers develop precise wording, it eliminates the excitement, the surprise, the emotional delight of an unscripted evening. Television likes precision and predictability in its "live" events; networks hate it when the Oscars go overtime. Yet, by copping to precision, entertaining speeches became static, dull. You got the feeling the movie stars had lost the motivation to deliver their lines.

I also keep having Snidely Whiplash fantasies of a pre-tribute interview with some aging actor: "You *will* thank the AFI!" "Never!" "You will!" "Never!" "Then I'll foreclose your career and get Raymond Massey!" "I'll thank them, I'll thank them."

Then there was the presentation of the AFI Scholarships. A noble deed! In an industry noted for its racism and sexism, I found it interesting that the three recipients included two women and two blacks. How efficient! However, I'd like to know if these three will ever get a chance to make a real film instead of super-8 toys. The industry odds are against them--but all you saw on the show were these cinematic greats awarding scholarships to all the correct minorities. Subliminal message--"See, we're really good guys." And the recipients were never given a chance to comment.

The film clips were lovely. Scenes were shwon from JEZEBEL, MRS. MINIVER, LITTLE FOXES, THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES, WUTHERING HEIGHTS--all beautiful, well-crafted films. However, I noticed that in every introduction to the film clips, reference was made to Wyler's "legendary association with Samuel Goldwyn" and "the fabulous films he made at MGM." It sounded like every film clip came from association with Goldwyn's "genius", doesn't it?

Except--if you read the program credits, you would have noticed that six or seven studios had contributed film clips. None of the others were mentioned. Puzzling? Perhaps--unless you knew that MGM has a package of 40 or more films available for sale to TV stations and that package includes "at least half a dozen" by Wyler. The AFI rep, when contacted in Washington, made repeated mention of the "Goldwyn package" of films ready for distribution. He could only name one other supplier upon direct questioning. Am I seeing dark plots in back rooms? Or am I just aware enough to know that the American public, after seeing luscious film clips selectively chosen from Wyler's good and bad films (DODSWORTH is no prize) is now programed to seek out these films on local TV stations? And realize that TV stations, knowing the enhanced value of the "Goldwyn package," will be willing to pay lucrative prices to the "Goldwyn packagers"? The AFI sold us another image, one which will only benefit the film industry in its dealings with the broadcast medium.

The tip-off to the manipulation came from two major personalities on the show. First was Greer Garson, who dared to berate the industry for not offering her parts, then offered a loving tribute to Wyler as "a man who cared about the excellence of every moment on film." The audience responded to her with hoots and whoops, showing a true emotional response instead of its previous tepidly polite applause and obligatory standing ovations. My AFI person admitted that Miss Garson's comments had not been scripted; indeed, the running script simply listed "Garson comments" and left it at that.

The other clue came from Wyler himself. As he stepped to the dais to acknowledge his tribute, he reached into a pocket and--GASP!--pulled out a sheaf of those damnable index cards! Amid images of a ghost-written speech of honor, Whyler broke into a wry, sideways grin. "I'm making a few cuts," he said--and the audience went wild. The ovation was sustained for several minutes. Why? Wasn't it just a comment on the "length of everyone else's speeches", as that poor AFI person insisted? Or was it perhaps a sly comment from the great director on TV's tyranny over his tribute? Without spontinaeity, the show was a hype, a con. Yes, it was good for the overall finances of the film industry--but doesn't a director of Wyler's stature deserve a more honest tribute?

FIG. 86.—A martin hous..

Noël Burch's Film Theory

--Martin Walsh

In an article in *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1956, entitled "Montage, My Fine Care," Jean-Luc Godard formulated, albeit cryptically, an anti-Bazinian stance:

> Cutting a camera movement in four may prove more effective than keeping it as shot....To direct means to scheme, and one says of a scheme that it is well or badly *mounted*.

Godard's subsequent cinematic praxis, we know, elaborated this notion, even as early as BREATHLESS, in which the pauses in the journalist's story to Patricia are eliminated, creating a strangely tumbling narrative rhythm while foregrounding Godard's directorial manipulation. From this time on, Godard's films have constantly explored cinema's constitution as a system of signs, rather than as a mirror of the world. But he has never given this semiotic enterprise any full verbal articulation, in the form of critical or theoretical writing (although the sequence of his films, from BREATHLESS through to TOUT VA BIEN, is clearly underpinned by an evolving theoretical foundation). As the sixties moved toward their close, however, criticism by Noel Burch began to appear, and by the time that his *Theory of Film Practice* appeared in 1967 (as a series of articles in *Cahiers du cinéma*), it could be seen that there existed on the critical front an intelligence to support the practical, creative experimentatio of Godard. Not that Burch's work has actually been devoted to critical elucidation of Godard's achievement (though he makes frequent reference to it), but their concerns are very similar, having parallel priorities.

In introducing *Theory of Film Practice*, Annette Michelson situates the book as commencing a new era of film criticism, one that supercedes the tradition of André Bazin. Typing Bazin's work as "the aesthetics of post-war Christian Democracy", Michelson continues

> In his own filmic ontology, Bazin has precluded the interest and the importance of the processes of abstraction and reflexiveness then at work. He had, moreover, precluded critical examination of the terms of its illusionism by and through the art itself....Fundamentally antipoetic, resolutely antimodernist, Bazin's taste and theory tended to sever film...from one's experience and expectations of advanced painting and music, and from the innovative theatrical movement then at its extraordinary height.

As one might expect, Burch reverses this situation: he is preoccupied with "the processes of abstraction and reflexiveness...at work," he interrogates "illusionism by and through the art itself," he is poetic, modernist, and frequently aligns film with current painting and musical practice. His radical departure from the tradition of Bazin is seen most clearly in his fundamental opposition: Bazin's criticism is based on the interior constitution of the shot itself, the way its "reality" reverberates through the depth of the image, the way the integrity of real time and real space is maintained, rather than "deformed" (as Eisenstein, for instance, "deforms"). Counter to this, the first chapter of *Theory of Film Practice* is entitled "Spatial and Temporal Articulations," and is concerned with the *links between* shots, as opposed to the content of the shot itself. In it, Burch outlines the various kinds of cuts that can be made: temporal articulations are divided into 5 kinds (straight match cut, temporal ellipsis, indefinite ellipsis, time reversal, and indefinite time reversal), and spatial articulations into 3 (spatial continuity, spatial discontinuity, and, between these two, what we might call "veiled" discontinuity, in which the actual spatial discontinuity is "matched" or orientated--as in the bulk of classic Hollywood narratives, via devices such as eye-line matching, "matching screen direction, and matching screen position.")

What, we may then ask, is the critical significance of such a classification? Burch argues:

> We are just beginning to realise that the formal organisation of shot transitions and "matches" in the strict sense of the word is the essential cinematic task....
> ...I have just briefly outlined a set of formal "objects"--the fifteen (5x3) different types of shot transitions and parameters that define them--capable of rigorous development through such devices as rhythmic alternation, recapitulation, retrogression, gradual elimination, cyclical repetition and serial variation, thus creating structures similar to those of twelve-tone music....
> ---It is only through systematic and thorough exploration of the *structural* possibilities inherent in the cinematic parameters I have been describing that film will be liberated from the old narrative forms and develop new "open" forms that will have more in common with the formal strategies of post-Debussyian music than those of the pre-Joycean novel.

This rallying call for the future of the cinematic art also inaugurated a new perspective on the history of cinema (or perhaps one should simply say a new history of cinema): the recognition of future directions involved the re-evaluation of the achievement of the past, and it is here that Burch differs decisively from critics such as Sarris, and other American (and indeed French) auteurists, for they rarely display any constructive concern with the future, or even the present situation of cinema: their delvings into the past are interested principally with the elucidation of style, personality, the expression of the individual, rather than the constitution, interrogation and elaboration of cinematic language, its articulatory *potential*.

Not that *Theory of Film Practice* is itself a historical survey--following the chapter on spatial and temporal articulations; Burch goes on to analyze the various relations between on-screen space, specifics of editing, the possible dialectical structuring of sound, of color/black and white, of tone, of duration, composition, and so on. The historical analysis has largely been developed since 1967, and its growth accompanies Burch's own politicization (like Godard), a politicization crystallized by the events of May 1968. Unfortunately, much of this analysis is not yet available in English: his essay on the German work of Fritz Lang ("De MABUSE à M: le travail de Fritz Lang", in *Cinéma: Théorie, Lectures*, ed. Noguez), and his book *Marcel L' Herbier* in the "Cinéma d'aujourd'hui" series published by Seghers, and yet to be translated. His work on "Primitive Cinema", on the development of Western film language from 1895 to 1935 hasn't even been written yet (the ideas for it have been formulated in detail in the context of some seminars he taught) and it seems unlikely that it will be written in the near future, since Burch is currently making films for the French Communist Party in Paris: theorizing has given way to practice. There are nevertheless several texts available in English: his "study of the concept of form in Japanese cinema" is due any day now (from Secker and Warburg in England), and will offer in particular a reading of Ozu and Mizoguchi that re-values their early work of the thirties, against the conventional estimation of the superiority of the "mature" last works of the fifties. At present there are three English texts[1] available besides *Theory of Film Practice:* a long interview in *Women and Film* nos. 5-6, an article entitled "A New French Cinema" in an issue of the English journal, *Afterimage* no. 4, and an article (and texts selected by him) in *Afterimage* no. 5. The interview is readily accessible in America. So I shall not discuss it in any detail here. But both the interview (taped in the fall of 1973) and the *Afterimage* texts (Autumn 1972 and Spring 1974) testify to the distance traversed since 1967, specifically in the way a political consciousness, a Marxist orientation, now underlies his approach to film aesthetics.

When Burch speaks of his "radicalization", his politicization, it is important to point out immediately that what he is concerned with is far from political propaganda:

> ...a better understanding of the "semantics" of artistic progress has made it possible to reread Brecht without taking literally his belief that politically committed--non-alienating--are must, by definition, convey a manifest political *message* (information)...(Intro. to 1973 translation of *TFP*.)

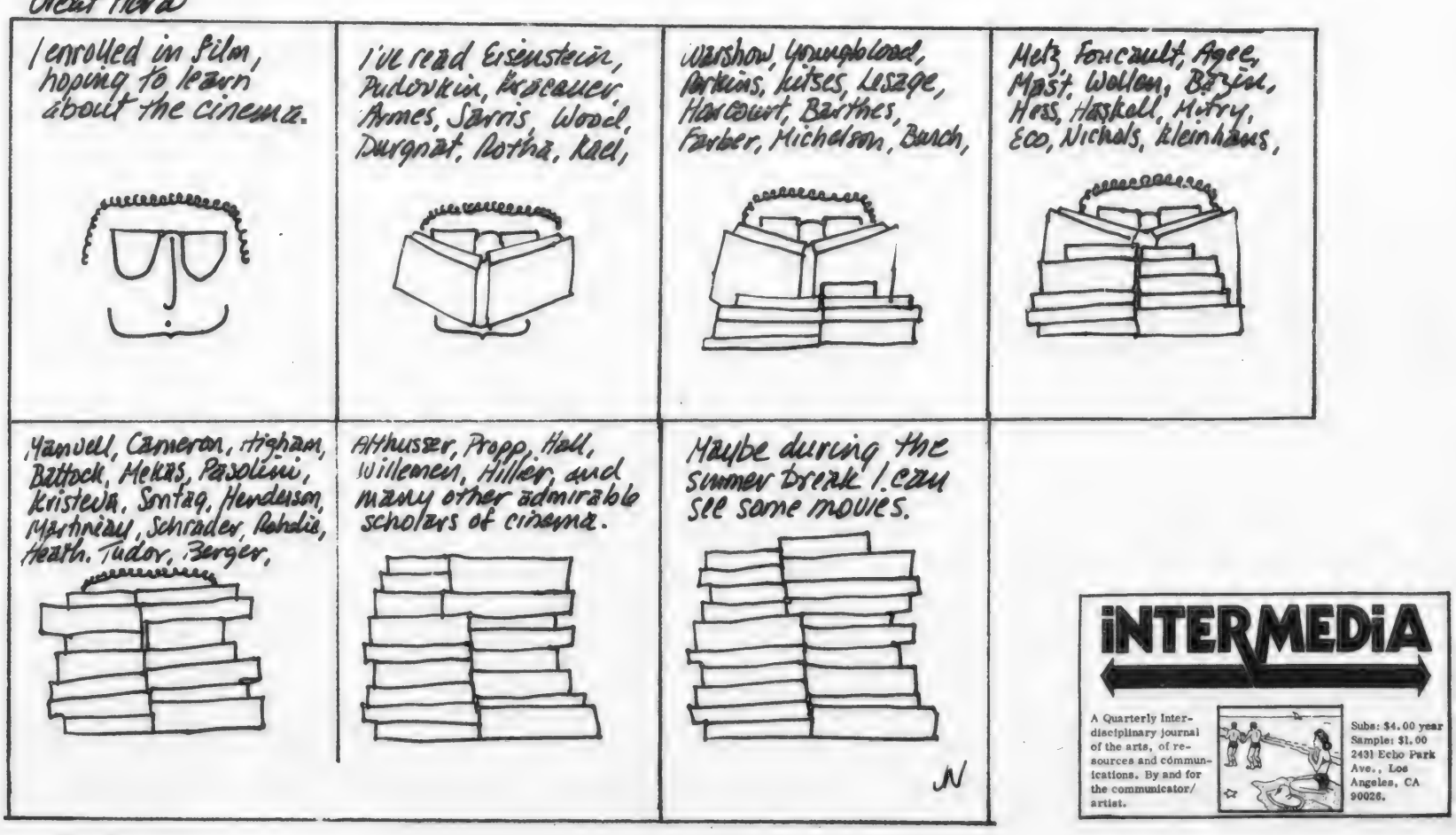
Consistent with the central focus of *Theory of Film Practice*, Burch's site of investigation remains formal, structural. But now there is a much clearer linking of ideological and structural concerns, articulated through the universe of theory circumscribed by Marx, Freud, Barthes, Foucault, Lacan, Godard, Straub, Kristeva and others.

Afterimage no. 5 is useful and important precisely for the way in which it outlines a very complete critical stance. It consists of four articles, only one of which is by Burch (and that is in collaboration with Jorge Dana); but the three articles that surround Burch/Dana's "Propositions" have been very carefully selected by Burch, to give "Propositions" a convincing and authoritative context. To emphasize the theorizing orientation of these three articles, none of them deal with cinema. The first, a translation of the first chapter of Pierre Francastel's book *La figure et le lieu* is entitled "Seeing...Decoding," and centers on a 15th Century Italian painting (a fresco) by Ghirlandaio; the second is by Jean-Louis Baudry: "Writing, Fiction, Ideology," and is translated from Tel Quel's *Théorie d'ensemble;* the third (which follows Burch/Dana's "Propositions") is by Emilio Garroni, and is the most abstract of all the pieces, being concerned with the constitutive characteristics of "the aesthetic object," whether painting, novel, or film: "The Heterogeneity of the Aesthetic Object and Problems of Art Criticism." The most accessible is the Francastel piece, but all three, though dense, repay the difficulty of reading: the whole volume numbers only 80 pages, but such is its compression of thought that, in the hands of less taut writers, it could run to triple that.

Peter Sainsbury's "Editorial" claims that one idea fundamental to the concerns of *Afterimage* is that

> there is in social discourse a hierarchy of codes, those of morality and behaviour being "supported" by those of perception and consciousness through codified systems of representation. And it is in relation to these systems that art works are to be evaluated.

Underlying this idea, and seminal for Burch as for *Afterimage*, are the principles of Umberto Eco's thought: the principle that *all* human communication is coded, that there are no "natu-


Great Hera
I enrolled in film, hoping to learn about the cinema.
I've read Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Brakhage, Arnes, Sarris, Wood, Durgnat, Rotha, Kael,
Warshow, Youngblood, Perkins, Kitses, Lesage, Harcourt, Barthes, Farber, Michelson, Burch,
Metz, Foucault, Agee, Mast, Wollen, Brion, Hess, Haskell, Mitry, Eco, Nichols, Kleinhans,
Manvell, Cameron, Higham, Battock, Mekas, Pasolini, Kristeva, Sontag, Henderson, Markiney, Schrader, Rohdie, Heath, Tudor, Berger,
Althusser, Propp, Hall, Willemen, Hiller, and many other admirable scholars of cinema.
Maybe during the summer break I can see some movies.
M

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ral" languages (and here both Eco and Burch explicitly oppose the Bazinian orientation of Christian Metz's sixties writing): to understand is to respond to the functioning of a code of some kind: codicity is the prerequisite of intelligibility. So far, so good. It is the next stage of the argument that has proven most polemical: let me try and suggest its direction through these fragments from the first two essays in *Afterimage* no. 5:

> Francastel: Change is the supreme law of life...Modes of thought and art forms never come into being as systems of signs intended to formalise established knowledge; they exist on the level of mental speculation, and of the problematic of the imaginary.
>
> Baudry: Ideology's domination depends on the illusion of universality, which it bestows upon the body of thought contained within it.
>
> It is precisely the function of theoretical activity to make us conscious of a system which in order to attain universality, i.e. to fulfill the role society wants it to play, must remain unconscious.
>
> Baudry quotes Julia Kristeva: It is only in poetic language that the "totality" of what man has at his disposal is realised in practice. In this perspective, literary practice is shown to be the exploration and discovery of the possibiliites of language; as an activity which frees man from given linguistic networks.

From here, Burch goes on to a statement of his situation vis-a-vis the notion of art: significant artistic work is by definition that which opposes the dominant ideology, that which counteracts the "seizure" of meaning into a single "signified."[2] As Roland Barthes has put it, in an interview, "the great problem is to outplay the 'signified,' to outplay law, to outplay the father, to outplay the repressed." Only when (and here Burch uses Eco's term) "the codes are set in crisis" does artistic/aesthetic activity commence.

Now, as Burch himself makes clear, there exist comparatively few examples of this kind of cinema of "deconstruction"; or, at least, very few prior to the emergence of Godard and Straub and a number of the "New American" directors, such as (the Canadian) Michael Snow. Prior to 1960, Burch suggests THE CABINET OF DR. GALIGARI, MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA, GERTRUD, certain early films of Ozu and Mizoguchi, among others, as being major texts of the deconstructive mode, and hence of exemplary aesthetic status. The polemical status of this categorization is self-evident, consigning as it does a whole host of revered auteurs to a level of secondary significance: Welles, Losey, Lang's American films, because they operate purely within pre-established codes, are deprived of "major" artistic status, being merely variations (of a greater or lesser complexity) on a set of "givens" (pre-existing codes).

The opening paragraph of "Propositions" states:

> ...it would never occur to any music critic or musicologist to include *Tristan and Isolde* and *West Side Story* in the same field of aesthetic pertinance (thereby destining them to analysis with the same tools, on the basis of the same axiomatic and, finally, the same criteria of judgment)...the refusal to see an aesthetically decisive discontinuity between the practices of, say, Bresson and Preminger is a flagrant use of false consciousness.

Insofar as Bresson and Preminger both make films, it may seem bizarre to argue that they are from different fields of pertinance: however, we must recall that there never had been any single theory of film that was capable of embracing the totality of cinematic expression--the traditional kinds of tools and criteria relevant to an evaluation of, let us say, THE GODFATHER, PART II, would not take us very far if applied to Brakhage's TEXT OF LIGHT, or Snow's RAMEAU'S NEPHEW, to name three recent films. The sense in which Burch cites Bresson and Priminger as being of different fields of aesthetic pertinence is one which Bresson himself (in his *Notes sur la cinématographe*, published in France this year) has expressed frequently. One of his formulations of the difference between "le cinéma" (e.g. Hollywood) and "le cinématographe" reads this way:

> Le CINÉMA puise dans un fond commun.
> Le cinématographe fait un voyage de decouverte sur une planete inconnue.
>
> The Cinema draws from a public well.
> The cinematographe undertakes a voyage of discovery on an unknown planet.

Written sometime between 1950 and 1958, the distinction (particularly in the way it reeks of the old division between "Art" cinema (Europe) and popular cinema (U.S.A.) may now seem a little quaint at first sight. What we are dealing with, however, is not a distinction between populism and snobbism, but between different orders of aesthetic activity (very similar conceptions, applied to jazz, appear in the criticism of Andre Hodeir, who makes a distinction between the innovatory talents of Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane and Cecil Taylor on the one hand, and the conservative, rule-following music of, for instance, Dave Brubeck, Art Tatum, Errol Garner, and Ray Charles, on the other. Burch's English translation of Hodeir's *The Worlds of Jazz* was published by Grove Press in 1972.) Bresson's distinction between the Cinema and Cinematographe, Burch's between "determined" cinema and "deconstructive" cinema, constitute, then, the two poles of this polemic. And it is important to recognize that Burch's arguments are founded not on an attitude of cultural superiority, but on the linguistic/semiotic investigations of researchers such as Roman Jacobson and Umberto Eco: at the root the distinction is descriptive--the evaluative overlay imposed by Burch results from his estimation of the needs of the future, the need for the growth of radical consciousness that will overturn art that masks its own ideology under the banner of universality. It is the infrastructure of a society's art that must be worked upon, not merely its superstructure; the codes and conventions of filmic articulation (the cinema's economic base, as it were) must be transformed.

Thus in the course of "Propositions," Burch and Dana outline an "elementary taxonomy"(which does not, obviously, set out to be the last word on the matter); this taxonomy breaks into four sections, as follows:

> A: Films accounted for and informed at all levels by the dominant codes (American serials of the thirties, Minnelli, Bondarchuk.)
>
> B: Films totally accounted for by the codes, but in which this fact is masked by a stylistic (which the dominant terminology describes as "form"). (Welles, Losey, Fellini, Ophuls.)
>
> C: Films which *intermittently escape* ideological determination of the codes. (BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN, Herbeir's L'ARGENT.)
>
> D. Films which are informed by a constant designation/deconstruction of the codes which, however ideologically determined at the strictly diegetic level, implicitly question this determination by the way they situate the codes and play upon them. (Dreyer's GERTRUD, Vertov's MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA, Wiene's THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI.)

Burch/Dana explain the constituent elements of each of these categories more fully than I can do here, but its shape is clear. The bulk of American *and* European narrative cinema falls into categories A and B: Sarris's pantheon filling B, and most of the people he ignores or relegates to classifications such as "Lightly Likeable," falling into A. Burch/Dana's outlining of the categories is followed by detailed analyses of three films, each from a different category: Burch's dislike of American Lang is argued through an examination of THE SECRET BEHIND THE DOOR, category A, which he sees as totally ideologically determined:

> ...the whole film is organised to facilitate the development of a diegesis whose economy consists in loading the slightest detail with signification, of flattening every signifier under the tyrranical weight of the signified....

But it is the analysis in support of category B that is perhaps most convincing, taking as its object a film commonly cited as the high achievement of American narrative: CITIZEN KANE. Keeping in mind Roland Barthes' notion that "style is form miscarried," Burch and Dana demonstrate that Welles' achievement was in no sense aesthetically innovatory, but simply a systematic exaggeration, inflation, of already current codes. They commence with an examination of the conformist aspects of the narration, concluding

> ....this narration is neither contradictory nor above all dialectical, not even ambiguous, for everything in it tends, in a relentlessly unilateral way, to accredit a number of myths which are perfectly acceptable to the dominant ideology: e.g. that the rich are as unhappy as the poor, that great (public) events have small (private) causes, that a great plutocrat is "despite everything" a great man, while women are futile and neurotic. The impressive virility and impenetrable complexity of Welles/Kane is deliberately opposed to the caricatured futility of his masculine retinue...what requires examing now is how this conformism is masked by a stylistics which quite understandably allowed it to figure, for a time, as a new sound (sic) on the history of the cinema, and which gave birth to a whole school of manneriists, from Kazan, Losey and Aldrich, to Arthur Penn and Ken Russell.

They then set out the principal "parti pris" of Welles' style--"deep focus/long take," low-angle shots, echo effects, rhetorical montage, emphatic back lighting, and so on, before going on to analyze the first flashback scene--the preparations for the departure of the young Charles from his parents--at some length. The conclusion they convincingly reach is that

> Welles and Toland were able--without in any way affecting the integrity of the narrative and dramaturgic codes... to forge a style which has amazed three generations of cinephiles through the simple expedient of *systematically amplifying* those same codes....Amplified in this way, they simply function more efficiently (we would cite as evidence the enormous influence that CITIZEN KANE exerted on post-war commercial cinema, as against the repression to which truly innovatory works like those of Dreyer have always been subjected.

The fundamental conformity of CITIZEN KANE is juxtaposed with the third and final close analysis of the essay, which is, not surprisingly, on Dreyer's GERTRUD. Here Burch/Dana's stragegy is to sidestep the normal appraoch to the film, that states that the film's principal interest resides "in the camera movements, shot composition and length of shots," privileging instead "the intersections,...the points of rupture articulating the system." Once again, it is the links between shots (rather than the "interior" of the shot) that is the foundation of their analysis, and it is one that is very fruitful, establishing the manner in which the petit-bourgeois ideology of the "pre-text" (i.e. the play which is Dreyer's source, and object of transformation) is stripped bare, dialecticized, its contradictions revealed, through the anti-illusionist editing (in which, almost without exception, a given mode of cut is never repeated, and hence never rigidly coded). From analysis of the film's cutting, they move on to discuss the flattening of the image (the refusal of depth) through a proliferation of framelines within the frames (paintings, fireplaces, doorways), and the way in which camera movement is denaturalized (the actors never speak while they or the camera moves). They conclude that

> It is not far-fetched to speak of Dreyer's adoption of a Brechtian attitude towards this text: everything contributes to stripping, relieving it of its dramaturgical charge, revealing all the "strings" which hold it together.

The film's ultimate importance for Burch/Dana is expressed thus:

> ...in this film we can see adumbrated (as it had been in CALIGARI and MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA (both of which are discussed earlier in the essay: M.W.)) the central "problematic" of picturo-filmic space, of the projection of the pertinent traits of depth onto a flat surface (the screen). And what is being refuted here is the very cornerstone of the illusionist edifice: the presentation of the pro-filmic space as "present," the camoflage of the representational character of filmic space, as well as that of the process by which the two communicate.

All I have done here, I am well aware, is give a very sketchy outline of Burch/Dana's position. And it is clearly one that is polemical, designed to inaugurate further discussion, open the field for further examination (Dana himself now claims that the only analysis/categorization in the article which he still accepts virtually in its entirety is that of GERTRUD). And in terms of future work, it is probable that the categorization of the American cinema demands reconsideration, a more nuanced schema. Burch's committment to works engaged in a process of semiotic interrogation has as its corollary a disinterest in works engaged in a *utilization* of codicity. In trying to restrict aesthetics to the area of "deconstructive aesthetics," Burch excessively privileges his vision on the contemporary necessity for radically new forms. Certainly one area of aesthetic activity is constituted by the framework Burch proposes, but it is a far more narrow one than that envisaged, for instance, by Eco's notion of the term "aesthetic." As Rossellini once observed, "Virgil was an "agit-prop" man for the Roman Empire...and at the same time he was a very great poet. He worked on absolute good faith, he admired his civilisation, and designed all his work to further it."[3] To observe that the majority of American cinema is ideologically determined is not thereby to banish it from critical examination. For one reason, there are a number of works (which Burch might, I suppose, put close to category C) which seem to bypass simple ideological determinations --some of Sam Fuller's work, Ford's THE SEARCHERS or YOUNG MR. LINCOLN, Von Sternberg's THE SCARLETT EMPRESS, for instance. And for another, our understanding of the functioning of narrativity (albeit ideologically determined) is hardly far enough advanced to dismiss it from further analysis. One direction this work may take is suggested by Raymond Bellour's article on ten shots from THE BIG SLEEP (see the English translation in *Screen* Vol. 15 no. 4); other possibilities are suggested in *JUMP CUT* 6 by M. Claire Kolbenschlag, writing about the cultural mythology presented by the American cinema. Bearing in mind the viability of these alternative approaches (Kolbenshlag's being a more generalized sociological project than one concerned with the specificity of the filmic activity, Bellour's being concerned with the interactions and relations of various pre-existing codes

Ideology in Action
No. 2

STRIKERS STONING A BUILDING

The use of violence in a strike, whether by workers or employers, is condemned by all good citizens.

Labor organizations have been severely criticized at times for the lawless acts of their members during strikes, for the methods they have used in forcing men to join the union and employers to establish the closed shop, and for limiting the amount of work their members may do. Certainly, to force a man to join a private organization against his will or to compel an employer to hire none but union workers, provided he has been fair in his treatment of the union, is as contrary to American notions of fair play and freedom as would be the attempt of employers to force laborers to toil under whatever conditions and for whatever wages they see fit to offer. When workmen receiving a fair wage shirk instead of putting their best efforts into their work, they not only hurt their employer, but by making goods cost more they injure the public and reduce their own income.

of cinema, rather than their negation), Burch's work remains one of the most lucid proofs of the importance and use of semiological/ideological approach to cinema. Particularly in the comprehensive examination of editing strategies and their ideological function, Burch has refocused analysis of film on an area widely ignored by the Bazinian orthodoxy; while this work is sure to be (and rightly so) contested and debated, such a debate could not occur without the pioneering work accomplished by Burch. It deserves to be read.

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[1]That is, three texts since *Theory of Film Practice* (1967). I am discounting his earlier articles for magazines such as *Film Quarterly* and *Moviegoer*.

[2]*Signs of the Times: Introductory Readings in Textual Semiotics*, ed. Stephen Heath. Cambridge, 1971.

[3]Interview (of 1965) translated in *Screen* Vol. 14 no. 4, p.123.

Afterimage no. 5 is available ($2.00) in North America from Martin Walsh, English Dept., University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada.

CRITICAL DIALOGUE

Native Land Reconsidered

We are printing the following correspondence between JUMP CUT co-editor John Hess and Michael Klein, who wrote the ADELE H review in this issue, because it brings up and elaborates the complex relationship between the present generation of Marxist critics and the generation of the 1930's. We agree with Klein that we need "to reclaim our radical cultural tradition from years of obscurity." Marx wrote that all previous history is the history of class struggle; U.S. history is no different in spite of what we learned in school. We need to discover and evaluate the struggle against U.S. capitalism, including opposition culture, learn from it, and extend it. --The Editors

Dear Michael Klein,

...I was curious about the perspective behind your *Velvet Light Trap* article ("NATIVE LAND, Praised then Forgotten," No. 14, Winter, 1975). I really liked the article, but also had some criticisms of it. I was struck by what seems to be your uncritical acceptance of the 1930's "Marxist" aesthetic, the "Marxist" perspective of the film, and the Communist Party line of the period. In fact, I'm very ready to doubt the revolutionary nature of any film Bosley Crowther can whole-heartedly praise. It sounds to me that you are reading a Marxist perspective into a film that advocates little more than trade unionism. You say, for example, that imitation of Soviet films IMPLIES a "socialist alternative" (p. 13). Steel girders become the equivalent of industrial capitalism. But in your description of the film you show that the enemy is not capitalism but "a fascistic anti-labor conspiracy." This conspiracy has a long and prominent history in American films. Fat cats, cigar chomping businessmen, rabid reactionaries appear in American Hollywood films from the very beginning. I would even suppose that Eisenstein got the stereotype from us. I don't see that these stereotyped enemies lead to an understanding of capitalism. In fact, I find them anti-revolutionary in the sense that they substitute the readily removable vicious fat cats--individuals--for the structural evils of capitalism. That very many of the people you name as Marxist aestheticians of the 1930's soon became ardent anti-Communists would seem to point up the superficiality of the Marxist aesthetic of the period.

At the top of page 16 is a curious statement: the film's events are portrayed "in the context of the changing American historical tradition of revolutionary struggle as analyzed by the CPUSA in 1938." This says only that the film was in line with the CP analysis of the time, an analysis which turned out to be very wrong and even counter-revolutionary. It seems to be that this disclaimer needs to be included if, as you say, the film is to be important "for filmmakers at work attempting to define and present the reality of our times" (p. 12).

I very much liked your description of the film; you really brought it to life. I hope that many more people will see it on the basis of your review. But I strongly believe that the advancement of thought on the left will not only come through refurbishing the left tradition in the USA but also through a careful critique of that tradition.

Anyway, I did want to get to know you, invite you to write for *JUMP CUT*, find out what you were up to, and offer you the above critique of the article. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
John Hess

Dear John Hess,

My apologies for this very late reply to your letter--after my interview with Leo Hurwitz in *Cineaste* and article on NATIVE LAND in *Velvet Light Trap* came out. At that time I was very involved with some struggles at the college (progressive faculty in the English Department being "terminated"; writing tests being used to track minority students out of their right to an education, etc.).. Then came a heavy summer session teaching load, and I misplaced your letter.

My first response to NATIVE LAND was primarily aesthetic--its structure was very close to a past/present/future (hope) film I thought of making in California; the images also had a strong sense of some of the best qualities in America--the sort that Dorthea Lange has captured in still photography. Then I had met Leo just after he had had a very bad experience at a "Radical Historians" conference--the charges ranged from "out of date" and "elitist" to national chauvinism and crypto-fascism. I don't think the beautiful poem by Ho Chi Minh that you reprinted in *JUMP CUT* would have met with their approval either--the humanism would have been suspect, the historical materialism would have been overlooked, and after all Ho wrote favorably about the American revolution and the Declaration of Independence.

My starting point in the Hurwitz interview and the NATIVE LAND article was that it was of primary importance to reclaim our radical cultural tradition from years of obscurity, first imposed by cold war repression, and later by a red-baiting-of-self reflex that began as a survival mechanism in the 1948-56 period and subsequently became a political habit. As I remember, you thought that I should have paid more attention to the cultural and political mistakes of the left in the 1930-45 period. Perhaps. But I assumed that this took place in the 60's, and today has reached the stage of overkill. So the main danger now is a sort of cynical and idealist New Left purism, that under the flag of Marx continues the hatchet job of cold war cultural and political historians, of academics who were for the most part the college teachers of current left wing critics.

However I should mention that a section of the Hurwitz interview did go into some of these matters--unfortunately it had to be cut from the version that went into *Cineaste*. In that part Hurwitz comments on some of the mistakes that were made in fronts, and on his black list experiences in the 1950's.

The particular reference to the CPUSA analyses of American history that you found confusing related to a specific point about 1938. I did not mean by this to indicate any sort of blanket endorsement of their policy, but only highlighted an aspect that seemed to relate to NATIVE LAND--namely, that the democratic political and economic ideals of the American revolution (all people are created equal, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness) cannot be realized under modern conditions of capitalism.

Today Marxist cultural critics seem to adopt a double standard toward our heritage. In the sphere of politics various "progressive traditions" exist: the Declaration of Independence (which in the first draft abolished slavery); John Brown and Harper's Ferry; Thad. Stevens and radical Reconstruction; the Anarchists and Haymarket; Debs from the Pullman Strike to the 1916 and 1920 elections; Haywood and the IWW; John L. Lewis and the building of the CIO, etc. (Of course criticisms can also be made of these examples.) Yet when it comes to a Blake or a Shelley, a Dreiser or a Dos Passos, or to the left cultural record (film, art, drama, literature) of the 1935-50 period we tend to adopt the perspective of the cold war critics (including Sarris) and say that the radical contribution was at best liberal, at worst confused and in the final sense only a myth invented by the Communist Party.

It is important to keep an open minded attitude toward that time, especially not to overlook that in the 35-39 period the CIO was built in militant action and many industries were unionized, that American radicals went to Spain to fight against facism, that various schools of Marxism became widely accepted by students and teachers and writers and artists, that large progressive film distribution networks were developed. Our generation may not have made some of the mistakes of the 1930's, however we have also not accomplished the good works that were done then. Articles on the past should proceed with some modesty.

Perhaps now some of your questions have been answered. I hope so. The one other concern I had in doing the interview and article was creating interest in NATIVE LAND, stressing what was best in the film. The articles came out shortly before the film was reissued in 16mm. It has been shown a fair amount in the NY area recently, and last night was on public television, very favorably described in the *Cue* blurb: "This film portrays the social struggle between the ruling class and the labor movement in America." I like to think that the articles have helped in a small way to focus attention on a film that grants the working class dignity.

Sincerely,
Michael Klein

The Last Disaster

Criticism of criticism of criticism is not my notion of a good time, but David Rosen's and Ernest Larsen's comments (in JUMP CUT 8) on my disaster films article of JC 6 warrant response, for three reasons: both make some interesting points, which may lead some readers to take seriously their arguments *in toto*; both distort or ignore some fairly crucial points in my article; and both are fundamentally wrong.

Both see disaster films as, in Rosen's words, symbolic reproductions of "what happens to bourgeois ideology...when it is subjected to strains of a period of crisis." Larsen notes the irony that "where once Heston parted the Red Sea on the strength of his jaw muscles, in EARTHQUAKE he literally goes down the drain." Larsen sees EARTHQUAKE and TOWERING INFERNO as pessimistic reflections of a crisis in social and political leadership. The films say to Larsen that "our heroes...are no longer sufficient to save us." Furthermore, he claims, "Nowhere in either film is it even suggested that survival is very likely on our own efforts either."

Larsen is dead wrong. As I maintained in my article, these films in fact bolster all the mythic bastions of middle-class ideology that moviemakers have been dishing out for decades. Millions pack theaters to see these movies not to witness confirmation of doomsayers' cries, but to rouse the adrenalin and, incidentally, to see that everything in the long run is okay, that all our values lie intact, that heroes remain and will help save the day. Note that, in EARTHQUAKE, domestic havoc, cynicism, sacriligious social outcasts are associated with the disaster's onset; marital sacrifice, restoration of order, the death of the outcast accompany the quake's subsiding. Charlton Heston may die, but he does so on the cross of loyalty to the institution of marriage, at the sacrifice of his hedonistic adultery. The dedicated, solid-American cop, George Kennedy, is still above the ground, as are lots of other honest people who will--the filmmakers overtly suggest--help themselves and others back to prosperity, with no real structural changes in society or the economy necessary.

In TOWERING INFERNO, architect Paul Newman may damn the "bullshit in the world"; but does this constitute a nihilistic vision? No, Chief Fireman Steve McQueen tells Newman to drop by the firehouse the next day, that he'll tell Newman how to build these ghastly high-rise firetraps right. The victims of disasters, in all these films, moreover, are strengthened, not debilitated, by the events. Recall that, in POSEIDON ADVENTURE, Gene Hackman even finds God. Larsen, in other words, may have some interesting abstract arguments; but they are removed from the real roots of these films' appeal--indeed removed from their actual underlying substances.

Rosen's piece is more clearly focused. A major qualm I have here is that he distorts some of my points. Rosen agrees with me that the popularity of these films lies, in part, in reaction against the youth-oriented films of the '60's; but he chides me for not taking a socio-political perspective on this, for ignoring that the "production and popularity of certain films in the '60's were themselves an aspect of the social and cultural milieu of the time." But in fact, I did suggest this, in noting that "traditional moviegoers" were reacting against not just the '60's movies, but the '60's themselves. These people were, to quote myself, "confused about contemporary youth, could not identify with these films' characters, could not understand what they were saying." AIRPORT, *et al.*, brought back the simple-minded bourgeois thrills just when they were missed the most.

Rosen's most valid, and his prime, point is that it is not enough for a critic to attribute big escapist films' popularity solely to the boredom of everyday life for millions, as, he claims, I did. (Actually, I went beyond claiming just that.) Rosen maintains that one must also account for the form or genre that these escapist films assume. I agree, but I think that, in this case anyway, the determining variables are more technological and bureaucratic than social or political. I cannot agree with his interpretation that the disaster films (or the disaster genre, which is ancient) are rooted in capitalist crisis. Fidel Castro recently told Francis Ford Coppola that JAWS is a "Marxist picture" because "it shows that businessmen are ready to sell out the safety of citizens rather than close down against the invasion of sharks." (Coppola's reply was "Oh.") Well, Fidel has an interesting point; but it would doubtless be news to Stephen Spielberg, Peter Benchley and Universal Pictures, and it would be even bigger news to the people slapping down up to $5 per head to see the movie. Capitalism or Marxism doesn't enter the equation anywhere: people go to see JAWS because it scares the daylights out of them. Period. Now one can draw some social implications from this. Surely a need to be excited vicariously is, in some respects, a commentary on the society in which one lives: drab lives, boring jobs, waning attachments, ephemeral community ties, the fading of socially-conditioned dreams. Introspection is to be avoided, since what's "internal" is largely artificial; so, excitement is sought vicariously. This is essentially the point I made in regards the disaster films, which have, I think, the same *basic* attraction for a lot of people that JAWS does. The social factors I've listed are essentially *aside from* any considerations of Watergate or recession. My basic point in the article--which was primarily designed as refutation to the pop-psych analyses of Ernest van den Haag and others like him--is that Watergate and recession are irrelevant in examining the motives of the filmmakers and, at most, only peripheral to the motives underlying the films' popularity among the populace.

To this, Rosen remarks that the "ways in which social factors condition and in turn are revealed in artistic production...often operate unconsciously as if 'behind the backs' of the individual artist or producer." This may be, but Rosen doesn't even attempt to demonstrate--or legitimately hypothesize--that the social factors he writes about are affecting the particular "artists" and producers connected with disaster films. Even Siegfried Kracauer, in *From Caligari to Hitler* (his fascinating, but often amorphous, psychoanalytic study of the connections between the films of Weimar Germany and the mentality anticipating the impending Nazi regime), attempted to support his contentions with documentary evidence, such as artists' public statements, letters, their social backgrounds, life experiences, and so forth. It is not enough to assume that a social phenomenon acts on a human as if on an automaton, or to assume that given such a situation reactions among various people will be identical. (In the '30's, for example, Busby Berkeley and Shirley Temple made up-from-the-blues musicals; but Warner Brothers produced some outstanding social dramas.) Unless and until Rosen applies such research techniques to the disaster films (and what documents I've run across support my thesis far more than his), his contention is flimsy. At best, his arguments supplement, but do not directly refute, my article.

--Fred Kaplan

French Censorship Revisited

This letter is a follow-up to my article on NUMERO DEUX (*JUMP CUT* 9), particularly with reference to Note 5 (which discussed the relationship of pornography to right-wing and centrist regimes).

The article was written in October 1975. At the end of November the ax fell: films banned to the under 18's are now to be taxed at 33% instead of 17%. Porn films have always been taxed

at the higher rate, but the new law now takes in films qualified as "pornographic, perverse and violent."

The government had, up till November, adopted the following policy: porn films, systematically banned by the Board of Control (censorship, of course, is non-existent in France), were passed by Michel Guy, Minister of Culture. As Jean-Louis Comolli pointed out in an editorial in *Cahiers du cinéma* 262/3, the howls of protest against porn, at first from the usual right-wing arbiters of morality, were soon joined by those of liberals such as Pierre Viansson-Ponte of *Le Monde*.

Now, of course, far more than porn movies is threatened: *any* film with an 18-year age limit is in for it. It means in fact that the censorship is economic rather than *overtly* political (it is political too, but the law masks this factor). Producers and distributors, not to mention writers and directors, will be forced to consider self-censorship in advance, i.e. to decide whether or not their films will be given an 18-year limit or not and, if so, what cuts to make before submitting it to the censor (sorry, Board of Control...) to as to get off with a 13-year age limit and hence to avoid financial difficulties.

What is more, the films that fall within this category will be deprived of the financial aid given to other films (12% of each cinema ticket sold goes on this). Not only that, already sinister enough: films made during 1974/5 are being screened again by the Board, with the result that the financial aid already given may in some cases be withdrawn (this concerns only those films banned to the under 18's).

The film industry is up in arms, pointing out the likely results: unemployment, cinemas closing, etc., apart from the most obvious one, lack of freedom of expression. To give a few concrete examples: films widely admired in France, such as A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, CRIES AND WHISPERS and LAST TANGO IN PARIS, would all come under the new law if being made now. None of these is French, but there is still the problem of distribution: who would take the risk of a failure, given withdrawal of aid and a doubling of the tax?

The political implications are clear and frightening: *nobody* has been able to define pornography and violence, so the definition will *always* depend on the government. In other words, any film considered subversive in the eyes of the ruling class could, in theory, be a victim of the new law, which some energetic right-wingers in the government want to see extended to cover *all* the media, including the press. Comolli has used the word "fascism" to describe the situation. Often misused in certain sectors of the French Left, it clearly applies here: all that does not comply with the morality and edicts of the bourgeoisie must be banished and silenced. The last vestiges of Giscard's much-vaunted "liberalism" disappear with this truly *pornographic* law.

--Reynold Humphries

Distribution Blues

William Van Wert's article, "The *JUMP CUT* Guide to 16mm Distribution," in the October/December 1975 issue, while presenting an essentially accurate picture of current 16mm distributors and their practices, leaves as many points untouched as it raises. In an article geared to the needs of students and teachers, he seems to present the question of cost as the most important criterion for the prospective renter to consider while ignoring major areas such as reliability of service, consistency of print quality, and availability of prints in correct aspect ratios or with good color balance.

Given that many feature films are in multiple distribution and available from widely differing sources with a variety of rental rates, the question of print quality then becomes of prime concern. A poor print with scratches, many splices, poor head and tail leader, poor color, no cue marks, in 1:1.33 ratio when originally produced in 1:2.66, washed-out and with virtually no contrast (probably a 16mm tv print), or scanned (another tv practice) is a travesty and one might as well be watching black and white television. It seems important then to go beyond price and to consider different distributors' practices in regard to print quality.

While many distributors with offices throughout the country (eg. Audio Brandon and Films, Inc.) offer good and very efficient service and seem to take care of their prints with good quality head and tail leader, academy leader, and cue marks, other smaller concerns do not necessarily do so. Getting to know an efficient and reliable local distributor is a good way to ensure good service when there is a need for a print of a title at short notice.

But the major problems occur with distributors who have sole rights to certain titles, whose offices are on the opposite side of the country, and who seem to be somewhat uncaring when it comes to certain fundamental aspects of print quality and control. I recently showed UA-16's CASABLANCA which turned out to be a tv-contrast print (all washed out and with shadings of greys rather than rich blacks and whites) while one of their prints of THE DECAMERON (rated, after I complained, as a "B" print) was the exact opposite and so "thick" that it was virtually impossible to see more than vague shadows on the screen. Reducing a cinemascope image to tv proportions generally results in some loss, but the worst practice of all, because it affects serious film study, is that of scanning the scope frame on an optical printer when the reduction print is made. Anyone who has seen Janus' prints of JULES AND JIM and 400 BLOWS will be aware of how much the films lose by this treatment: as a character walks across the screen he may appear to suddenly jump to one side or, as in JULES AND JIM, a single shot of characters together on the screen becomes two separate shots. In both cases the rhythm of the original cutting becomes completely distorted. In all other respects Janus generally offers a very high quality of print but in these examples a potential exhibitor will receive no warning that he is about to present a scanned version.

Related to this is the question of whether or not the distributor will offer a cinemascope version of an originally-produced scope title. When held solely by Warner Bros., THE WILD BUNCH was available in both scope and flat versions. Now that it has become available from many different distributors at a much lower rental rate it is important to ascertain if a scope print is being offered; to screen the film in anything but a scope version would be absurd. To their credit, Twyman's stated policy is to make scope prints of all their titles originally produced in that format available to renters. This kind of concern for the exhibitor needs support: paying some cheaper distributor half Twyman's rate for a flat print of THE WILD BUNCH gives you only what you pay for--half of the film.

Another objectionable practice is to offer flat versions of scope prints which reduce the aspect ratio to 1:1.85. Naturally this results in the loss of some part of the image, though not so bad as when converting to 1:1.33 ratio or scanning. However, some absurd things happen: a carefully composed scope image in the 35mm original loses much of its point when cropped. In the case of Film, Inc.'s flat print of RIDE THE HIGH COUNTRY, the final showdown, shot in extreme long shot, results in an empty frame, the protagonists having been removed in the cropping to the 1:1.85 format. Important to note though, Films, Inc. does release a scope version as well.

Almost all distributors inspect films before shipment but they do not always project new prints received from the labs. This often results in new but very poor quality reels which have slipped through lab inspections. I received an impossible second reel in an otherwise perfect new print of THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MISS JANE PITTMAN from Contemporary, who apologized for not having inspected the print themselves. Another practice is for city-based distributors to use a shipping company hundreds of miles away to actually send out and receive prints; this often means an appalling ignorance of the actual quality of the celluloid which they are selling. Cinema 5 tells me that they have now changed their policy on this, but after complaining of an atrocious print of Z which came with virtually no head leader (and no academy either), two reels with red head leader, and the marking on reels 2 and 4 transposed so that we nearly followed reel 1 with reel 4, I learned that the print had actually been handled by a subsidiary company.

While I am sure that we all have our individual horror stories, it is important that *as consumers* we be far more concerned with the *quality* of the image which we project on the screen. Maybe few people in our audiences know anything about aspect ratios, maybe most screenings of 16mm films are put on by amateurs who know next to nothing about film projection, and maybe few members of an audience really care enough to complain or to demand their money back. Your brief piece on the projectionists' lock-out in Berkeley raises important questions about projection being a skilled craft and, by implication, of a decline in projection standards in cinemas. While we may be aware of sloppy standards of 35mm or 70mm projection, most of us can do little about it; in the 16mm field it is most important that those of us involved in exhibition insist on the highest standards and support those distributors who offer the best prints. Van Wert's article should be seen as only the beginning of *JUMP CUT's* concern for all facets of the film production and distribution process.

Finally, in respect of the distributors listed in the article, there are at least two major omissions which suggest that the research is not very up-to-date. Images (2 Purdy Avenue, Rye, New York 10580) now offers many Janus titles and the classics at much lower rates, and its catalogue includes the new sound version of Abel Gance's BONAPARTE AND THE REVOLUTION. I have not seen any of their prints yet to be able to check quality. Secondly, the Learning Corp. of America distributes a large number of television-made features (JANE PITTMAN, GLASSHOUSE, MISSILES OF OCTOBER, TELL ME WHERE IT HURTS, etc), some of what are also held by other companies. Incidentally, MacMillan Audio Brandon hasn't had a San Francisco office for *years and years*. It might be nice to see some of the entries up-dated once in a while.

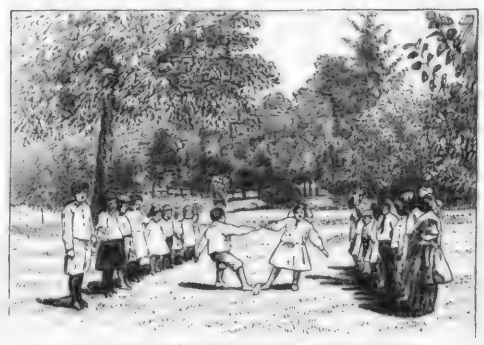


FIG. 104. — A park, a place where people may enjoy the outdoors.

John R. Webber
Program Director
San Francisco State University Cinematheque

We are interested in running a comprehensive survey of 16mm users' evaluations of the service and print quality of distributors and would like to hear from people interested in working on such a survey.

As Van Wert pointed out in his opening remarks, it is very difficult to get up-to-date accuracy on addresses, especially of smaller distributors. We welcome distributors' information on address changes, new catalogues, etc., and will pass it along to our readers.

Two important distributors who were left out of our list are: Women Make Movies, 257 W. 19th St., NY, NY 10011 distributes a number of excellent films by women including WOMEN'S HAPPYTIME COMMUNE which was reviewed in our last issue; Pacific Street Film Collective, 280 Clinton, Brooklyn, NY 11201 distributes three radical films they have completed: FRAME-UP! on political prisoner Martin Sostre, RED SQUAD on police harassment of radicals, and INCITING TO RIOT. --eds.

Swinging on Burch's Theory

Martin Walsh's analysis and evaluation of Noel Burch in this issue (pp. 61-63) raises the question of the politics of radical film form. I agree with Walsh that Burch is excessive in promoting deconstructed film form. If it were only a matter of Burch's views, additional comments would be unnecessary. But Burch is symptomatic of a larger problem: a new formalism which not only separates form from content and elevates form above content, but one that also takes pure film form as itself a sufficient political weapon to overthrow bourgeois ideology (and perhaps even the ruling class itself?).

This new "political" formalism frequently relies on distorting the ideas and practice of Bertolt Brecht to gain a seemingly left-wing flavoring. Most obvious is the attempt to discard Brecht's content in favor of Brecht's form. Burch says Brecht's belief in political content can be done away with. Discarding Brecht's content has been the main activity of bourgeois critics--the playwright's communism is claimed to be a "humanism," or he is turned into just another experimental modernist author. To find an ostensible radical like Burch endorsing this view is alarming, especially when any cursory examination of Brecht's plays and theory reveals that what separates Brecht from modernism in the arts is not his innovative form but his political content. "Brechtian" means the fusion of a new form and a marxist content. As Roland Barthes once pointed out: [Brechtian] distancing is not a form (which is precisely what all those who want to discredit it say it is); it is the relationship of a form and a content. In order to distance, there has to be a reference point: the meaning."

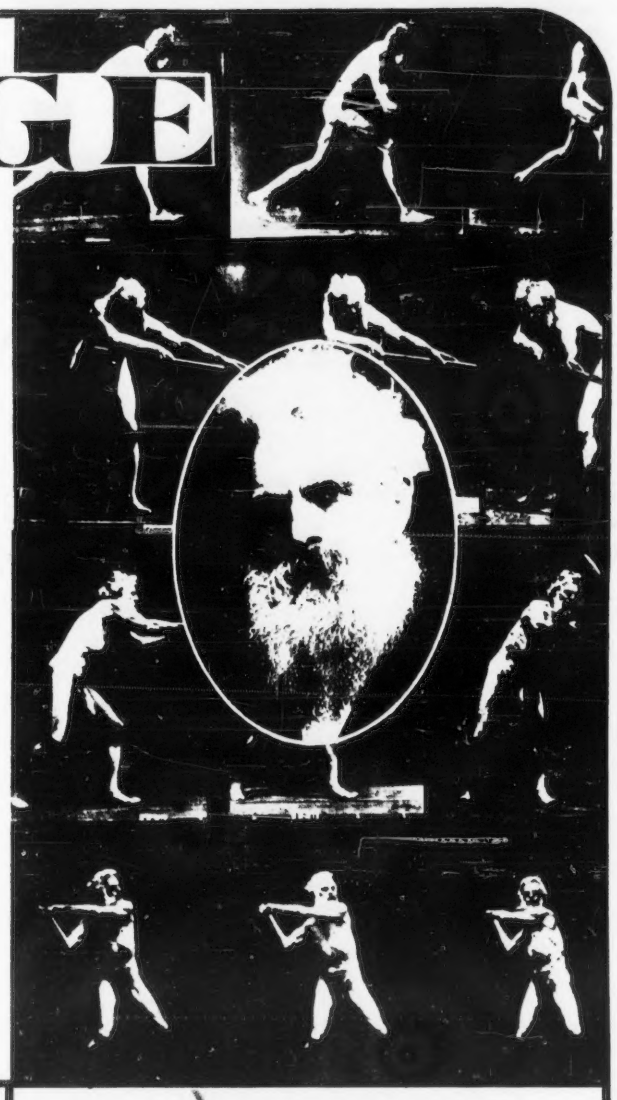
By attempting to deny Brecht's content, Burch arrives at Brecht-without-content: that is, simply modernist technique under the label of revolutionary art. This is an effort to give positive political value to modernist form by association, since modernist form alone can't seriously be claimed as revolutionary and socialist. Thus all varieties of formal innovation can be labelled "Brechtian" and thereby made to seem left-wing. When laid out in these terms, the fallacy is obvious.

Underpinning Burch's efforts, the key quotes by Francastel, Baudry, and Kristeva, which define true art in terms that only apply to the avant-garde of the last 100 years, indicate a worthy desire gone wrong. The idea of being able to attack the dominant ideology, of overcoming it through avant-garde artistic form, or through "theoretical activity" as Baudry argues, is attractive, though only a partial truth on inspection. If radical artistic form alone were able to challenge ideology, then we'd already have overturned it, for modernists in the 20th century have devoted their artistic lives to perfecting radical form which they hoped would attack bourgeois modes of thought.

Burch is half right. There is, as he argues, an imperative need to examine new forms, to understand the real or potential effect and use of them in creating revolutionary art. It must be done. But to simply justify formalist modernism as itself revolutionary assumes that the wresting of political power is exclusively a mental gimmick. If overthrowing capitalism were so simple, it would be nice for petty bourgeois intellectuals who could then be reassured of

MUYBRIDGE
Man in Motion

by Robert Bartlett Haas



The "godfather of moving pictures," Eadweard Muybridge was a more complex and mysterious man than appears in most film histories. By devising a bank of sequentially triggered cameras, Muybridge proved that a horse does have all four feet off the ground at once. His experiments led to incredibly extensive documentation of movement in animals and humans, and gave him his place in the history of moving pictures. But this work was only a small part of Muybridge's long and colorful career. He became eminent as a still photographer through elegant studies of Yosemite and Central America. He was also the "official" photographer for the Modoc War, the last armed conflict with the Indians in the U.S. Haas traces Muybridge's family origins, untangles different versions of his work for Leland Stanford, and recounts the sensational events surrounding his trial for the murder of his beautiful young wife's lover—Muybridge was acquitted. He also discusses the effects Muybridge's work had on other artists.

"An excellent new book . . . the most comprehensive and authoritative."
—Alfred Frankenstein

219 pages, 156 illustrations, $18.50

SIXGUNS AND SOCIETY

BY WILL WRIGHT

A STRUCTURAL STUDY of the WESTERN

The Western might seem to be not only a well loved but almost too well known film genre. However, most earlier books on the Western have been superficial in approach. This innovative study, applying structuralist analysis to Western plots, comes up with novel discoveries about Western mythic forms as they have evolved from traditional to contemporary patterns. It demonstrates that the analytical techniques of Propp and Lévi-Strauss can have workable application to a major film genre. The films analyzed are top-grossing Westerns from 1930 to the present. Among the many artistically outstanding films included are: *Stagecoach, Shane, The Searchers, High Noon, Johnny Guitar, Rio Bravo, The Professionals, True Grit, The Wild Bunch,* and others.

227 pages, $10.00

The Rise and Fall of British Documentary

The Story of the Film Movement
Founded by John Grierson

Elizabeth Sussex

This book is an attempt to recreate the real human experience behind the myth of British documentary—utilizing a kind of documentary method, intercutting the author's commentary and interview material. Sussex talked with all the important living figures of the documentary movement about its complex conflicts, frustrations, and missed chances. Her account is tempered, critical, and knowledgeable.

240 pages, 41 halftones, $11.95

Two New Paperbacks from California

Jean Renoir

Raymond Durgnat

"For anyone interested in Renoir, the French Cinema, or the development of European thought in relation to the cinema, this is a major piece of work." *—The Listener*

443 pages, illustrations, $4.95

Kuleshov on Film

The Writings of Lev Kuleshov
Translated and Edited, with an Introduction
by **Ron Levaco**

"Provides the film scholar for the first time with a wide range of the master's thought, and shows how Kuleshov's conscious use of signs and typage in his film-making presaged current studies of film semiotics." *—Cantrille's Filmnotes*

238 pages, $3.45

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their essential role in the revolution. Their primary task: to destroy bourgeois ideology through formalist art. This is a celluloid, paper, and canvas revolution--painless and clean. Intellectuals themselves don't have to change; they just bring the masses along to where the intellectuals are. Petty bourgeois dreams. Pretty silly. Pretty elitist.

Marxists recognize the importance of subjective change, of overcoming false consciousness. But they believe true change in consciousness has objective sources such as the life situation and action of the working class and the intervention of the revolutionary party.

While Walsh criticizes Burch, he himself slides over into a similar formalism in attempting to argue the similarity of Burch's theorizing and Godard's cinema. Certainly both are anti-Bazinian, and that is healthy and needed. But Walsh sets up a false opposition: "Godard's films have constantly explored cinema's constitution as a system of signs, rather than as a mirror of the world." The first part is true: Godard has been fascinated with film commenting on itself. But he has also reflected (and reflected on) the world. Is not WEEKEND his metaphor for modern capitalist civilization? Is not 2 OR 3 THINGS a social critique? Can the obsessively marxist Godard-Gorin films PRAVDA and STRUGGLES IN ITALY be said to be primarily about cinema? Walsh is seduced by Burch's "deconstructed" category. Godard's post-68 films *are* deconstructed, as are Snow's experimental films. Godard's are *also* clearly marxist in content, while Snow's are not.

Attempts to use Brecht as a "left" cover for formalism are bound to fail, for reading Brecht makes the limits of Burch's aesthetic-political program painfully obvious. In his essay, "The Popular and the Realistic," for example, Brecht clearly argues for an art that is both. Popular, he says, "means intelligible to the broad masses." Realist he defines as:

> Laying bare society's causal network / showing up the dominant viewpoint as the viewpoint of the dominators / writing from the standpoint of the class which has prepared the broadest solutions for the most pressing problems afflicting human society / emphasizing the dynamics of development / contrete and so as to encourage abstraction.

A pretty far cry from Burch's pantheon of deconstruction. Burch's vision of "stripping bare" ideology with film form is interesting, but also a pipe dream. They sure must smoke some powerful dope over in Paris.

--Chuck Kleinhans

FEDS TRYING TO REPRESS THIRD WORLD FILMS

As we go to press with this issue, Tricontinental Film Center is facing US government-imposed censorship. The US Justice Department, utilizing the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, has ordered Tricontinental to register as a "foreign agent." Yet, Tricontinental does not know, and has not been informed of, what country they are an agent for. All that an official in the Justice Department would tell their lawyers is that the content of six films listed in their catalogue caused the order to be given. But the Justice Department has refused to identify the six films or their country of origin.

The intent of this maneuver is obviously to drive Tricontinental out of business. Under the requirements of the act, foreign agents must label their printed materials as "foreign propaganda," which would in this case include Tricontinental's catalogue, all promotion material, and even their films. All of Tricontinental distributed films would have to be preceeded by a leader labeling them "foreign political propaganda." In addition, the FBI would have access to Tricontinental's books and records at any time, extensive reports would have to be filed on all film rentals and sales, the organization's officers and employees would have to be registered, and the names and addresses of all Tricontinental's customers would have to be filed with the government.

Tricontinental is the major distributor of Third World films in the US. Some of their films are: from Africa, A LUTA CONTINUA (Mozambique), FREE PEOPLE IN GUINEA-BISSAU; from Asia, AWAY WITH ALL PESTS (China), PEASANTS OF THE SECOND FORTRESS (Japan); from Latin America, HOUR OF THE FURNACES (Argentina), BLOOD OF THE CONDOR (Bolivia), THE PROMISED LAND (Chile) and other films from the Allende years; MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT (Cuba), LUCIA (Cuba), THE BRICK MAKERS (Columbia), TUPAMAROS! (Uraguay), THE NATIONALISTS (Puerto Rico), YO SOY CHICANO, and in the US, ATTICA, SONG FOR DEAD WARRIORS (Wounded Knee), FINALLY GOT THE NEWS; and from Europe THE HISTORY BOOK and BLOW FOR BLOW.

To bring these films and others like them to the American viewing public, and especially to classrooms and communities, is to present a protest against racism and imperialism. These films have been important to oppressed minorities in the US, both as a source of cultural pride and as an inspiration in their struggles to organize against oppression. For many people, the Tricontinental films have been their first chance to understand the situations and conditions of the Third World.

The Foreign Agents Registration Act is a broad, catch-all legislation which the Justice Department is free to interpret almost any way it desires. While it includes exemptions for commercial, religious, academic, scientific, and artistic pursuits, in practice it has been used primarily as a tool of Cold War diplomacy and control of domestic dissent. Obviously this move against Tricontinental meshes with the Ford administration's desire to stifle anti-imperialist education in the US.

We must insist that we have free access to the intellectual and cultural products of the entire world. This attempt to impose censorship on film distribution in the US presents a threat to all of us.

At present (June 1), the Attorney General is "reviewing" the case. We urge you to protest this abridgement of our democratic rights of free speech and dissemination of information. Letters can be sent to Edward Levi, Attorney General, Justice Department, Washington, DC 20530. Please also send a photocopy to Tricontinental Film Center, 333 Sixth Ave., NY, NY 10014.

--The Editors

NEWS AND NOTES

With continuing political unrest in Argentina, the American Film Institute recently ran a series of films at their Kennedy Center theatre in Washington entitled, "New From Argentina." In light of the accelerating mass movement, the coup and new junta, the AFI selected such relevant fare as PAINTED LIPS, "a chronicle of life in a small town...full of...subtle humor and nostalgia"; THE TRUCE, "a deeply moving film of a tragic love affair between a lonely widower and a young and beautiful girl" (sic?); and REBEL PATAGONIA, "a provocative...account of (how) the army put down striking workers. Above all the film is a humane, wonderfully characterized statement about justice." The public-spirited AFI is remembered for cancelling STATE OF SIEGE for the opening of the Kennedy Center.

Insight Exchange (PO Box 42534, San Francisco CA 94101) is presenting "People Change the World," a seven week film-discussion series at the Roxie cinema in SF. The series is offered for a national campus tour this fall, featuring films such as UNION MAIDS, BLOW FOR BLOW, THE DOUBLE DAY, etc. Write for details.

Beginning Jan. 77, the AFI will be offering $300,000 in filmmaking grants. Write to the Independent Filmmaker Program, AFI, 501 Doheny Road, Beverly Hills CA 90210.

The Film Center of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago is selling two booklets, Films by Women/Chicago 74 and Trickfilm/Chicago 75 at $2.00 each. Films by Women features articles by three JUMP CUT editors and background material on many American and European female directors. Trickfilm contains extensive program notes from a ten-day animation festival. The booklet includes original filmographies of many famous and little-known animators. Film Center, Art Institute, Chicago IL 60603. All copies are sent by first class mail.

We came across an excellent pamphlet containing the script of Alexander Kluge's THE OCCASIONAL WORK OF A FEMALE SLAVE and an interview with the director. It may still be available from the Perth Film Festival, PO Box 149, South Perth, WA 6151, Australia. The cover price is $1.50 (Aust.), so maybe if you sent along some postage money too...? Occasional publications like this are often important, but hard to find or find out about. We'd like to hear about any that our readers come across.

The French publication Cinéma d'aujourd'hui offers an excellent double issue (5 and 6) on militant cinema in France.

We're happy to announce Julianne Burton and Gerald Peary have joined our editorial board. Julianne, who wrote on THE HARDER THEY COME in JUMP CUT 6, is working on a book on Latin American cinema and teaches at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Jerry teaches at Livingston College, Rutgers, concentrates on American film, and will be our book review editor. Why half of our editorial board now has names beginning with the sound "J", we leave to conspiracy theorists.

Welcome to Great Hera, drawn by Joyce Nelson, who appears in this issue.

Rocky Mountain Media Messages is a modest mimeoed newsletter on film, video, and pop culture. It always has some interesting and useful information. Editor Lloyd Agte has been reporting on FBI harassment of collectors who buy 16mm used prints. No price is listed on the newsletter, but why not send along a couple of bucks to help with the postage. Lloyd Agte, Division of Language and Lit, Casper College, Casper WY 82601.

In another victory for saber-rattling diplomacy, the US denied a group of Cuban filmmakers visas to attend the recent FILMEX festival in Los Angeles. Ever-vigilant, Henry Kissinger is to be praised for making Southern California safe for democracy.

MUSIC AND PEOPLE OF THE NORTHEAST (Tania Quaresma) is one of a number of Brazialian films distributed in the US by Embrafilme. For details, write Fabiano Canosa, 317 W. 99th St, 2C, NYC 10025.

A festival called "Revolutionary Films/Chicago 76" will be held at Chicago's Art Institute, July 9-25, and will include such films as BURN!, THE PRINCIPAL ENEMY, LUCIA, BLOW FOR BLOW, NATIVE LAND, DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES, and day-long special programs on Soviet, US, and Latin American film.

This year's Edinburgh International Film Festival (Aug. 22-Sept. 4) will concentrate on independent, political, and avant-garde films and will include two special events (with films, discussions and papers), on psychoanalysis and film, and on the avant-garde. Write to the festival office at 3 Randolph Cresent, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH3 7TJ

More news and notes on p. 68 (the back cover).

The Last Word

THE UNITY OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

Recently, new film theory has become more important and more controversial. At academic conferences there have been antagonistic splits between the "theorists," usually identified with new critical approaches such as semiology, and the "humanists," who favor traditional patterns in studying and teaching film. Most film publications have chosen sides, open or closed to new theoretical work. In the artistic avant garde, a new group of films have been made which are highly conscious in using film theory. In political filmmaking, traditional styles and forms have been challenged by theoretically oriented innovators such as Straub-Huillet and Godard. All of this interest in theory, particularly in the context of what appears to be a new movement of young people against an established orthodoxy, has naturally raised polemics, voices, and challenges back and forth.

Amid this, some of our readers have questioned JUMP CUT's interest in new film theory and criticized our devoting space to theory and running reviews which are heavily and obviously informed by film theory. We take those criticisms seriously, especially since the JUMP CUT editorial board has continually discussed the problem that some articles and reviews are unneccessarily abstract, "academic" in the worst sense, and difficult to read. Problems of awkward style and jargon-filled expression in film criticism can and must be challenged by editors, changed by writers, and criticized by readers.

Certainly the suspicions many people have of theory are often justified. Distrust of theorizing is often part of seeing the elitism behind much theoretical activity which is abstract--removed from the real concerns and struggles of real people. It often seems that the dense writing style of many theorists serves only to set them apart from and above others, to establish a snobby clique of mutual admirers, when their work isn't designed to obscure the poverty of their insights and to be used as a pass to professional advancement. It's quite obvious that some people have joined the new theory parade to help their careers.

But, as we remarked in an earlier editorial (JUMP CUT 6), "While the strong anti-intellectualism in much film discussion can be seen as a healthy reaction against academic elitism, it is primarily reactionary, especially when voiced by leftists, because there is no such thing as 'doing without theory.' Every human activity is based on some theory, and to refuse to recognize it is to refuse to face up to the values and implications of one's own theory." It's the elitism inherent in abstract theorizing removed from the lives of people, not theory in and of itself, that's the root problem.

To proceed "without theory" in thinking or acting in either film or politics is to soon go astray. A simple anti-intellectualism quickly results in unconsciously repeating established ideas which are even more pernicious when masked, unquestioned, and not open to being challenged. Some well-meaning people spurn theory for what they can learn from their immediate environment. Such empiricism fails because it assumes that fragmentary experience is sufficient to understand our complex world. Similarly, pragmatism can be motivated by a genuine concern with immediate results, but what "works" in the short run often fails in the long run, precisely because pragmatism dismisses the rational analysis and scientific thought which allows a larger view of reality. "Doing without theory" is like exploring a cave without a light.

On the other hand, to proceed only with theory is like being hypnotized by the light and never examining what it illuminates. Untested in the world, theory alone becomes a sterile dogmatism. Today, such dogmatism is the crucial political problem in the area of theoretical activity. A fair amount of seemingly radical theoretical work is being done in isolation: building theory out of theory in a vacuum. As editors, we frequently receive manuscripts which demonstrate the limits of such activity. Often the statements and ideas of "authorities" are taken at face value and as universally valid. If a filmmakers says his or her film was supposed to do something, that is taken as sufficient evidence that it was accomplished. Similarly, the prestige or theoretical coherence of some theorists is taken to demonstrate the validity of what they've said. There are also the articles which are simply in-house critiques, reshuffling what has been done by others and assuming that because something is of interest to a tiny number of people, it's of interest and value to everyone.

Such assumptions are dogmatic because they are not tested against reality. Theory is not an end in itself; our task is not simply to understand the world, but to change it. We have to have some clear idea of the purpose of studying theory so that our study can be turned to our own use. What should motivate the study of theory? It must be related to the use of theory--that is, to informing practice, practical activity in the world. The real difficulty is that to get a sense of what is needed, you have to be engaged first in changing the world. You can't know what other people need until you work with them.

Because every film theory is based on value judgements that are political in origin and effect, film theory cannot be considered apart from political theory. And political theory cannot be considered apart from political practice. Thus, it is imperative for one's practice to be directed by theory and for one's theory to be modified by practice. But we can't confuse the issue, as some mistaken people have, by claiming that theoretical work itself is a kind of political practice. That claim is nothing more than wishful thinking on the part of intellectuals who wish to be part of the movement for socialism while remaining aloof from it. Genuine political practice is active, collective, immediate, and mass in nature. It is active, an intervention in the world, not merely a contemplative mode of behavior: an armchair radical is a contradiction in terms. It is collective, an activity done in collaboration with others, and is open to mutual support and criticism. Only in that way can isolation and individualism be dealt with and overcome. It is immediate, related to one's local situation, involving face-to-face contact with others and intervening in the world one lives in. It is mass, relating to other people and useful to them. This doesn't necessarily mean relating to massive numbers of people, but getting beyond the enclosed and self-confirming world of most intellectuals.

Practice is vital to developing radical film theory because only practice can provide direction to theorizing and a test of it. Theory is important because it can guide action, and practice is vital because it is the source of theoretical knowledge. Theory and practice are dialectically related, with practice providing new theoretical insights and theory in turn being tested against reality. As Mao Tse-Tung phrased it in his famous essay, "On Practice": "If you want knowledge, you must take part in the practice of changing reality. If you want to know the taste of a pear, you must change the pear by eating it yourself."

Once we understand the necessity of political practice, there is no excuse for inaction. There are problems to be overcome, but a long march does begin with a single step. And everyone who wants to change reality must make such a step--transforming thought into social practice. The opportunities available are always shaped by specific circumstances. For some there may be ongoing struggles close at hand, already-existing organizations and projects. For others, a first step may involve beginning with a very modest but practical project, such as starting a radical film series. For yet others, the initial task may be simply finding others to work with by starting a political study group that can evolve into an active project. Whatever one's particular case, the task of beginning practice remains the same.

We don't get to choose the historical moment and the political situation in which we live, but we do choose our stance in relation to our time and place. Have a pear.

John Hess
Chuck Kleinhans

OVERWHELMED BY SUCCESS

Two years ago, the first issue of JUMP CUT came out. Since then we've been overwhelmed by success. We expect to sell over 4,000 copies of the issue you have in your hand, and we've grown in quality as well as circulation. We've published significant, original work and keep getting fine manuscripts each week. We've created a new voice in film criticism and in the left cultural community in the US, and we're working hard to improve. As the two years have passed, the editorial board has matured in the way it works together and in the political consensus among the members.

Because our success has brought lots of new editing, correspondence, and record-keeping, and because we rely on our own donated labor time while working at other jobs to make a living, and because some of us have to work when we can find part time or temporary jobs, scheduling everything has been difficult. We've decided to slow down the frequency of production. JUMP CUT will be coming out irregularly now, although we promise at least four issues a year. In the meantime we are looking into various schemes for speeding production and involving more people.

We're financially stable. JUMP CUT is financed not only by its subscriptions and sales, but also with financial contributions by Judy, Chuck, John, and Julia, who work to eat and to support this political project. We're proud of our independence from patrons, advertisers, foundations, and direct or indirect government subsidy. Our integrity comes from depending on support only from staff and readers. Because some people have said they'd like to increase their support, we're offering a $25 sustainer's subscription. What you get in return is the satisfaction of helping out; what we get is money we can put into needed equipment, publicity mailings, and advertising. And, if you only have a little of that green energy to share, then a regular subscription still gets you six or twelve issues, and it makes a nice gift for your favorite film buff or that Marxist-Leninist who has everything.

We intend to keep dealing with new films and to maintain an ongoing dialogue about film, culture, and politics. To improve we need and enjoy your feedback. From now until next January, we'll going through a six month process of criticism and evaluation of our first two years. We would welcome any and all evaluations and suggestions, from a detailed critique of our editorial practice to even a postcard noting what you think are the best and worst articles we've run and why. If you have a moment, let us know what you think we do well and what we could do better.

Julia Lesage

CHARLES W. ECKERT, 1927-1976

I'd met him around campus a few times, but I got to know Charlie Eckert when I took his Shakespeare course at Indiana University in 1970. The course was supposed to be a heavy and fast reading of all the plays and poems for non-major grad students, but we started by spending several weeks on Titus Andronicus because Charlie had gotten into the question of violence in art, and the play was a perfect text for discussing the matter at length. He was that kind of a teacher--open to examining significant problems in a deep way. I remember one day on Merchant of Venice which began with a student's totally unorthodox speculation on the play's meaning and which built into an excited discussion by all of us with Charlie supplying the specialist's knowledge to build an unusual but sound interpretation.

That class ended for me with the Cambodia/Kent State/Jackson State strike, so I never did get around to reading King Lear. But that summer I ran into Charlie almost daily at the university swimming pool. He was getting serious about film, he told me, and every day was studying one of the basic film books. He was that kind of an intellectual--serious, methodical, exploring, growing. From his background in English Renaissance literature, he moved into film and edited Focus on Shakespearean Films, and continued his earlier work on new critical methodologies.

He was a meticulous scholar, spending almost two years preparing his article on MARKED WOMAN (Film Quarterly, 16:2, Winter, 73), for which he read all the French criticism on materialist film analysis and did a complete structural analysis of the oppositions in the film according to Lévi-Strauss's analysis of myth by watching a videotape of the film about 100 times.

Like many of us, Charlie began to do radical intellectual work because of his experience in the campus movement of the Sixties. He was instrumental in preparing a scathing documented study of an Indiana University administration instigated police attack on passive anti-war protesters (an abridged version appears in Foster and Lane, Protest! Student Activism in America). Repeatedly, Charlie supported the demands and actions of students, minorities, women, and the left against the administration and the power structure behind it.

He quickly moved beyond his initial explorations of structuralist criticism to envision a materialist history of Hollywood films in the Thirties which would trace the connection between Eastern finance capital and the Hollywood industry. Again, his meticulousness kept him from jumping to any facile conclusions. About a year ago, he remarked to me that after reading Marx's Grundrisse, he felt the core of marxist methodology was exhaustive research backed up by Marx's philosophy. Charlie did enough research to write a multi-volume work, studying finance, distribution, advertising, movie theatre architecture, art moderne as an influence on mise-en-scene, the fan magazines, and the films themselves. One summer was spent researching the content of all the thousands of feature films made in the Thirties.

Charlie loved sports and was an excellent bicycle racer often seen peddling through Bloomington and the surrounding hills at top speed. A sunny person, he loved a good joke and an evening with friends. He was friend and teacher to five of us who started JUMP CUT, offering encouragement, interest, constructive criticism, and his article, "Shirley Temple and the House of Rockefeller," in our second issue.

We were dismayed to learn of his death by his own hand on April 11 for reasons he chose to leave unexplained and unexamined. He left behind the nearly finished manuscript of Hollywood and the Great Depression: Studies in Class, Style, and Ideology, which hopefully can be completed by others. Much, much more, he left behind a great vacuum in the lives of those who knew him. Our loss is immense.

Chuck Kleinhans, for
John Hess
Judith Hess
Julia Lesage
William Van Wert

MORE NEWS AND NOTES

False Consciousness Department, 1. Walter F. Parkes and Keith F. Critchlow have completed THE CALIFORNIA REICH which, they claim, shows "the Nazis as members of our society, not inhuman monsters, but the people next door." The documentary reportedly shows Nazis in mundane domestic situations, watching tv, at Bund meetings, etc. Parkes commented, "it's a real freakout to realise that you can indeed sit and have a beer with someone who wants to destroy a third of the world's population." Amid the protest of Jewish groups, Burt Lancaster is circulating a letter that champions the film's artistic merits.

False Consciousness Department, 2. Ken Kesey, complaining about his lack of compensation for the first draft of the screenplay of CUCKOO'S NEST, said, "no artist wants to be raped." Who does, we wonder.

The Swedish Broadcasting Corporation, TV2, Division of Current Affairs and Documentaries, wants to hear from independent filmmakers and smaller production companies in order to increase its coverage of US produced films. Approximately half of the network's airtime is purchased from abroad. Filmmakers should contact Gunilla Ekstrom, 1517 30th St. NW, Apt. 106, Washington DC 20007.

Tamiment Library, New York University, which holds the AFL-CIO collection, announces the formation of an oral history of the American left project, under the directorship of Paul Buhle and Roger Keernan, to record the experiences of the veterans of radicalism in labor, politics and culture. The intent is to create a central repository for those interviews that already exist and encourage recording of many activists who have not been interviewed. Information: Oral History of the American Left, Tamiment Library, Bobst Library, NYU, 70 Washington Sq. South, NYC 10012.

Iris Films (PO Box 26463, Los Angeles CA 90026) is presently doing research and fundraising for a film on lesbian mothers scheduled for production this summer. Frances Reid, Cathy Zheutlin and Liz Stevens want to hear from women who have been or are now involved in lesbian mother's child custody cases. Contributions to the production fund are also welcome.

Afterimage (not to be confused with the British publication of the same name), Feb., 1976 arrived. It covers film, video, photography, and has an article on Jonas Mekas's DIARIES, NOTES AND SKETCHES. Looks like a good source of information on fine art/avant garde film. $10 for ten issues, Visual Studies Workshop, 4 Elton St., Rochester NY 14607.

Alternatives, a forum for activism in the Seventies, features articles on organizing, "student statesmanship," and radical justice in Detroit. Edited by JUMP CUT contributor Fred Kaplan, Alternatives can be ordered at can be ordered at 75¢ per issue from the Oberlin Political Caucus, Box 32, Wilder Hall, Oberlin College, Oberlin OH 44074.

Chicago's Mayor Richard J. Daley got a lot of spring political mileage out of his proposal to ban movies with excessive violence from being seen by children and adolescents. The idea is to apply an "X" type adult rating to extremely violent films. What kind of films was "hizzoner da may-er" thinking of? Daley suggested Haskell Wexler's MEDIUM COOL was the kind of dangerous film he wanted banned. You may remember the film's famous on-scene footage of Chicago cops beating demonstrators during the 68 Democratic convention. The Daley controlled city council passed the measure in May. Its constitutionality remains in doubt.

Books about Film, A Bibliographical Checklist is a new publication by James Monaco and Susan Schenker. Listing sections on film history and technique as well as criticism and reviews, the booklet can be ordered for $2.00 from New York Zoetrope, 31 E. 12th St. NYC 10003.

On April 24, JUMP CUT and Haymarket Films co-sponsored a showing of new films and videotapes to Chicago women. The program included: SOME TIMES IT'S AWFUL HARD--FIVE WORKING WOMEN (video) by Kim Beaman and Lydia Kleiner, KEEPING THE DOOR OPEN--ANN SHAFER (video) by Kim Beaman and Lydia Kleiner, ALL OF US STRONGER by Haymarket, GETTING STRONG--SELF DEFENSE FOR WOMEN (video) by Eleanor Boyer and Rhonda Stein, and RAPE by Jo Ann Elam. We enjoyed the opportunity to show the films and tapes and talk about ways of using them.

Papers on film and literature, film and the other arts (including music, dance, fine arts), and film theory and criticism are solicited for a film studies conference Mar. 31-April 2, 1977. Film conference, Comparative Literature, Indiana University, Bloomington IN 47401.

Film Criticism is a new quarterly that featured Gerald Mast attacking the AFI, Henry Giroux on Wertmuller, an interview on the scholarly work establishing Adele Hugo's diary which Truffaut drew on, and reviews and remarks on Fellini and some Hollywood films in its premier issue. Articles on semiotics and new French film are promised for future issues. Too early for a sense of where it's going so we offer no decisive verdict, but editor James Goldworthy's first editorial is a confused mishmash that blames "the Establishment" for everything from Pasolini's murder to Jonas Mekas quitting the Village Voice. He manages to equate the torture of Chilean filmmakers with Ingmar Bergman having a nervous breakdown: a rather obscene comparison. If you want to give it a try, it's $4.00 for 4 issues; Box 825, Edinboro PA 16412. $7.00 abroad.

Epic West is a new center, "for the study of Bertolt Brecht and Epic Theatre," which includes a theatre, library, film archive, and educational seminars, lectures, and other activities which complement the intent of advancing Brecht's ideas. 2640 College Ave., Berkeley CA 94704.

While it was around, it was great. Now the last issue has been announced of the Bulletin for Film and Video Information. The last issue will update past information and provide a guide to resources and services in the field of independent film and video. Single copies are $2.00 for the western hemisphere; elsewhere $3.00. 80 Wooster St., NY, NY 10012. If only some other institution would take over this publication...it was a simply invaluable guide for makers and users of independent film and video. Any imaginative film departments or museums out there?

Women's Films: A Critical Guide (Audio-Visual Center, Indiana University, Bloomington IN 47401) surveys many documentaries, particularly those made originally for tv and those intended for educational use. Groups of specialists viewed and commented on the films examined and Carolyn Geduld then synthesized their remarks on the content with consideration of the film as a whole. An excellent and consciously feminist resource.

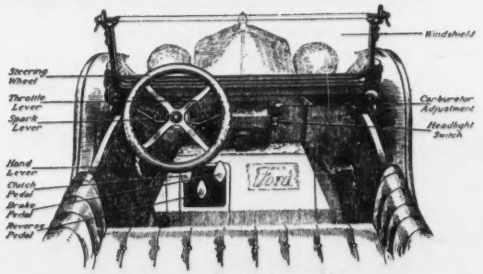

FIG. 109.—Control of automobile.